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A MODERN GALAXY

SIXTEEN SHORT STORIES

KATHARINE NEWLIN BURT ★ ★ ★ JAMES NORMAN HALL

ELSIE SINGMASTER ★ ★ ★ HENRY SYDNOR HARRISON

HAROLD NICOLSON ★ ★ ★ PHYLLIS BOTTOME ★ ★ ★ DENIS MACKAIL ★ ★ ★ ESTHER FORBES ★ ★ ★ ROLAND PERTWEE

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A MODERN GALAXY

Short Stories by

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BOTTOME · JOHN BUCHAN · KATHARINE NEWLIN BURT
WILLA CATHER · ESTHER FORBES · JAMES NORMAN
HALL · HENRY SYDNOR HARRISON · OLIVER
LA FARGE · DENIS MACKAIL · HAROLD
NICOLSON · ROLAND PERTWEE
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Assembled by
Dale Warren

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

'NOVELIST and short-story writer' is a classification with which we are all familiar, yet it does not follow that those who have achieved success through the medium of the novel are likewise at home in the more precarious field of the short story. The converse is equally true. Houghton Mifflin Company include among their authors a significant number who have demonstrated their ability to navigate a full-rigged ship and a catboat with equal dexterity. The sixteen short stories published in 'A Modern Galaxy' are offered both as testimony to their versatility and as an earnest of their adroit handling of the briefer form. At the end of the volume appears a list of the published books of each of these writers, whose conspicuous talents have brought them recognition in these two major departments of fiction.

DALE WARREN

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A MODERN GALAXY

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PAPAGO WEDDING[1]

Mary Austin

There was a Papago woman out of Panták who had a marriage paper from a white man after she had borne him five children, and the man himself was in love with another woman. This Shuler was the first to raise cotton for selling in the Gila Valley — but the Pimas and Papagoes had raised it long before that — and the girl went with him willingly. As to the writing of marriage, it was not then understood that the white man is not master of his heart, but is mastered by it, so that if it is not fixed in writing, it becomes unstable like water and is puddled in the lowest place. The Sisters at San Xavier del Bac had taught her to clean and cook. Shuler called her Susie, which was nearest to her Papago name, and was fond of the children. He sent them to school as they came along, and had carpets in the house.

In all things Susie was a good wife to him, though she had no writing of marriage and she never wore a hat.

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[1] Copyright, 1925, by Mary Austin.

This was a mistake which she learned from the Sisters. They, being holy women, had no notion of the *brujeria* which is worked in the heart of the white man by a hat. Into the presence of their God also, without that which passes for a hat, they do not go. Even after her children were old enough to notice it, Susie went about the country with a handkerchief tied over her hair, which was long and smooth on either side of her face, like the shut wings of a raven.

By the time Susie's children were as tall as their mother, there were many white ranchers in the Gila country, with their white wives, who are like Papago women in this, that if they see a man upstanding and prosperous, they think only that he might make some woman happy, and if they have a cousin or a friend, that she should be the woman. Also the white ones think it so shameful for a man to take a woman to his house without a writing, that they have no scruple to take him away from her. At Rinconada there was a woman with large breasts, surpassing well-looking, and with many hats. She had no husband, and was new to the country, and when Shuler drove her about to look at it, she wore each time a different hat.

This the Papagoes observed, and, not having visited Susie when she was happy with her man, they went now in numbers, and by this Susie understood that it was in their hearts that she might have need of them. For it was well known that the white woman had told Shuler that it was a shame for him to have his children going about with a Papago woman who had only a handkerchief to cover her head. She said it was keeping Shuler back from being the principal man among the cotton-growers of Gila Valley, to have in his house a woman who would come there without a writing. And when the other white women heard that she had said that, they said the same thing. Shuler said, 'My God, this is the truth, I know it'; and the woman said that she would go to Susie and tell her that she ought to go back to her own people and not be a shame to her children and Shuler. There was a man from Panták on the road, who saw them go, and turned in his tracks and went back, in case Susie should need him: for the Papagoes, when it is their kin against whom there is *brujeria* made, have in-knowing hearts. Susie sat in the best room with the woman and was polite. 'If you want Shuler,' she said, 'you can have him, but I stay with my children.' The white woman grew red in the face and went out to Shuler in the field where he was pretending to look after something, and they went away together.

After that Shuler would not go to the ranch except of necessity. He went around talking to his white friends. 'My God,' he kept saying, 'what can I do, with my children in the hands of that Papago?' Then he sent a lawyer to Susie to say that if she would go away and not shame his children with a mother who had no marriage writing and no hat, he would give her money: so much every month. But the children all came in the room and stood by her, and Susie said, 'What I want with money when I got my children and this good ranch?' Then Shuler said 'My God!' again, and 'What can I do?'

The lawyer said he could tell the Judge that Susie was not a proper person to have the care of his children, and the Judge would take them away from Susie and give them to Shuler. But when the day came for Susie to come into court, it was seen that though she had a handkerchief on her hair, her dress was good, and the fringe of her shawl was long and fine. All the five children came also, with new clothes, well-looking. 'My God!' said Shuler, 'I must get those kids away from that Papago and into the hands of a white woman.' But the white people who had come to see the children taken away saw that, although the five looked like Shuler, they had their mouths shut like Papagoes; so they waited to see how things turned out.

Shuler's lawyer makes a long speech about how Shuler loves his children, and how sorry he is in his heart to see them growing up like Papagoes, and water is coming out of Shuler's eyes. Then the Judge asks Susie if she has anything to say why her children shall not be taken away.

'You want to take thees children away and giff them to Shuler?' Susie asks him. 'What for you giff them to Shuler?' says Susie, and the white people are listening. She says, 'Shuler's not the father of them. Thees children all got different fathers,' says Susie. 'Shuler ——'

Then she makes a sign with her hand. I tell you if a woman makes that sign to a Papago he could laugh himself dead but he would not laugh off that. Some of the white people who have been in the country a long time know that sign and they begin to laugh.

Shuler's lawyer jumps up... 'Your Honor, I object ——'

The Judge waves his hand. 'I warn you the court cannot go behind the testimony of the mother in such a case...'

By this time everybody is laughing, so that they do not hear what the lawyer says. Shuler is trying to get out of the side door, and the Judge is shaking hands with Susie.

'You tell Shuler,' she says, 'if he wants people to think hees the father of thees children he better giff me a writing. Then maybe I think so myself.'

'I *will*,' said the Judge, and maybe two, three days after that he takes Shuler out to the ranch and makes the marriage writing. Then all the children come around Susie and say, 'Now, mother, you will have to wear a hat.' Susie, she says, 'Go, children, and ask your father.' But it is not known to the Papagoes what happened after that.

PERPETUAL CARE[1]

MARGARET AYER BARNES

KATE DALTON came slowly down her elliptical staircase, her slender hand clasping, just a little too carefully for comfort, the delicate iron rail. It was lovely, of course, to look at, but how disconcerting to have a staircase that always made you remember that you were fifty-nine. Sooner or later she would certainly slip on those triangular treads. Slip ignominiously down at the feet of her own butler, standing with deferential dignity on the black-and-white tiles below. What would Sands do about it, she wondered, when that day came? Would he lapse, even momentarily, from the perfect manservant as he scrambled her to her feet? Appalling, really, to be fifty-nine! Sixty in April. Appalling to fumble, be it ever so little on any staircase! Reassuring to hear her still shapely, high-heeled slippers tap briskly, competently, on the marble floor.

Kate paused for a moment in the doorway to cast a capable glance into her little paneled dressing-room, and caught her reflection in the mirror beyond. Yes, on the level at least, in the proper light and with the correct setting, she did not look her years. Not even in her

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[1] Copyright, 1928, by Margaret Ayer Barnes.

mourning, now that she had abandoned the melodramatic absurdity of that widow's veil. Ridiculous, mourning. Fancy dress, it always seemed to her. What had two yards of crisp black crêpe, dragging her hat back and giving her a headache, to do with the curiously disproportionate sense of desolation that Sam's death had brought into her life. But she had never dared to say that even to the boys, let alone to Katherine — Katherine, whose grief for her father seemed somehow all expended in the sacred significance of the width of a grosgrain ribbon, the decent distinction between a suède and a shiny black kid glove.

Even Lily, to whom as a daughter-in-law (Lily had still been a daughter-in-law two years ago when Sam had died) had been entrusted the solemn office of buying the family funeral weeds, even Lily, light, laughing Lily, had accepted the doleful duty as a very serious affair. Kate could hear her now, insisting that a becoming white crêpe frill was quite correct for a widow and arguing with Katherine as to whether a daughter-in-law could wear the thinnest weight of black chiffon stockings, lugubrious phrase, 'at first.'

'Not for six weeks!' Katherine had declared with firmness, and had carried her point. Katherine always carried her point. But, then, to be sure, she was usually right. Just like Sam in that. Probably Lily's frivolous little legs in sheerest chiffon *wouldn't* have been quite the thing in the family lot at Graceland. Or even walking up the aisle of the Presbyterian Church behind all those honorary pall-bearers — presidents of all the best banks and a United States Senator and three corporation lawyers of really international distinction!

Sam, of course, *would* have approved his own funeral. That was the only thought that had sustained Kate in the dismal pageant in which she was incredibly required to play the first feminine rôle. Dear simple-hearted Sammy! Wasn't one of the most appealing, most lovable, things about him the fact that to the last he had never lost his childlike faith that pageantry mattered profoundly, that all that glittered *was* gold? Kate was recalled to herself by the discreet shuffle of her butler's feet. She looked capably about the gray-green grandeur of her Georgian entrance.

'Sands,' she said competently, 'that filet door curtain will have to be cleaned again before we go South. See that Jennie puts up the new one before the party to-night. Tell the cook to have sandwiches with the cocktails — those little hot things she does with tuna fish. Caviare at table would make us late for the opera. We'll be six at dinner.'

'Yes, madam,' said Sands, his hand on the door-knob.

'And, Sands, if there's no more Italian vermouth you can make us whiskey sours. I'll be home quite early. I'm just stepping out to the doctor's. Tell Miss Brice where I've gone in case there should be any important message. But you needn't mention it to Mr. Bob or Mr. Christopher, if they should inquire.'

The children were all so silly, making that foolish little question of her foolish little pain, once she'd mentioned it to Katherine, a matter for solemn family conclave. They'd been at her for months to go to see a doctor. She owed it to her personal pride not to tell them she'd gone.

'Yes, madam,' said Sands once more, throwing open the door to the wintry sunshine of the crisp January afternoon. Kate was conscious of a slight tremor in his impassive countenance, that faintly personal glint in his eye that she sometimes thought betrayed a humanly affectionate concern for her welfare. The betrayal of any human emotion, when on duty, Kate knew Sands could only consider a weakness.

'But, Madam,' he was incredibly volunteering, 'the steps are very icy.' And that was Sands's hand under her elbow, and he was unbelievably steering her down her slippery path toward her motor, just as if she were a very old lady. She braced herself to pull away from him with rebuking independence, but her heels were high, and the path *was* icy, and here came the pain again, very inopportunely, so that she could only clutch him for a moment, quite breathlessly, until it passed.

Benton, standing motionless beside the open door of the limousine, seemed somehow to catch and reflect

Sands's absurdly anxious expression as she passed him by and sank, relieved, on the soft whipcord cushions of the motor. She *was* old or ill or something queer if two such good servants as Sands and Benton would permit themselves to exchange a concerned and understanding glance over her diminished head. She gave the doctor's address with dignity, as Benton, once more the perfect automaton, wrapped the brown beaver rug about her knees.

Funny, this pain. She'd felt it more than a year now. But not often, until just lately. She'd felt so run down all fall. So tired. And of course, though she wouldn't have confessed it to Katherine for worlds, she *had* taken Bob's divorce awfully hard. Curious, you thought you were so free a spirit until one of your own children ran amuck and then you realized that, for them, at least, you passionately desired only the most conventional security. Any compromise that would keep them safe. Peace, without victory.

Your own life was different. Taking chances, now and then — that had been the fun of it. It was only being foolish, after all, that taught you that complete recovery from any act of folly was always possible. You learned by your mistakes. You learned a lot, to understand yourself and others. Not to judge — ever. What *didn't* you come to understand by looking back steadfastly down the years on those few moments when you, yourself, had been divinely a fool. But *you* had common sense, and, after all, your life, as you reviewed it at fifty-nine, what did it matter? One silly little life? Your children's lives? That was different, somehow. They were children. They were much too precious to be trusted with themselves.

Bob had behaved badly, very badly. She would never blame Lily. Though she had hated the marriage at first. Bob just back from France and the war that had redeemed him, after having been twice dropped and finally irrevocably sent home from Yale. Just twenty-four years old and earning just that many dollars a week on a high stool in his father's bank. And Lily, silly little Lily, unfortunate child of the war-spoiled generation, only nineteen years old, undereducated, overdressed, looking back on a brief thrilling past of war-time emotion, looking forward to a future of which she impossibly demanded only a continuation of the emotion and the thrill.

She had felt this *couldn't* be going to happen to Bob, not just when he had returned to her, no longer the proverbial problem that he had been since his first school day, but, incredibly, a hero, self-assured and reassuring, with his citation from Château-Thierry for 'conspicuous bravery under fire'! Why, pacifist at heart that she was, she had found herself shamelessly thinking that the World War had not been fought in vain if it had redeemed her Bobby.

Well, she had learned her lesson. Good *couldn't* come out of evil. Not in the long run. Meeting death — that was comparatively easy. Didn't we all come to it, sooner or later? No preparation at all — that stimulating adventure — for the drearier, if more subtle, ordeal of meeting life. It was the rendezvous with life that the young hero poets should stress. Life was the adversary to fear. It played a waiting game. One way or another didn't it always get you in the end?

Bob had been glorious in the French trenches. She'd never forget it and she hoped the world wouldn't. But in the Chicago night clubs — well, it had been just the same old story. And if Lily hadn't helped, silly, little, laughing Lily, she hadn't really hindered. She'd had Robbie, the first grandchild, and if, sometimes a little drunk, but never really disorderly, in the manner of her reckless generation, she had danced the marriage down to destruction, hadn't it always been following Bob's lead? Strange how she'd learned to love Lily, just when they were about to lose her.

Children-in-law, she supposed, were always something to take with a certain philosophy. No use worrying about them. Accept them, without futile complaint, like the weather. What, now, had Katherine seen in Charles, whose solid worth, in its way, had been just as great a blow to maternal solicitude as the lightness of Lily! Sam, though, had always liked Charles. Had thoroughly approved *that* marriage. Thought him sound. Thought him sane. Sam had always instinctively picked his friends, as he had his investments, with an almost subconscious flair for those that could never fail him. And Charles, certainly, had never failed any one. He'd been a real son to Sammy and wonderful, always, about Bob. A good husband. A good father. If she and Christopher had perversely thought him just a little too sound, that was their affair. What was it Christopher had profanely remarked — and just when Charles was being so sensible, if a little sententious, about Bob's divorce — 'I prefer my gold plated. The solid variety is too heavy for domestic use!'

Darling Christopher! Provocative Christopher! The only one of her children, who, in a solemn moment, could be counted on to say something charmingly frivolous and funny. The light touch — supreme gift of a fairy godmother — what a weapon that was for gallant young Christopher in the unequal combat with life! But was it really? The fact that he could laugh a little, lightly, at Cora Curtis, call her 'The Youth's Companion,' mock, so disarmingly, in the sanctity of his mother's dressing-room, the seven telling years that stretched between them and the intriguing tilt of her little silvery head, didn't at all prevent him from falling a victim to her widow's wiles. For Christopher was quite definitely, quite seriously, and, oh, so lamentably, falling. Not a weapon, at all, the light touch, really. Rather a smoke screen, a shield, behind which you hid in the thick of battle, so that the bewildered non-combatant at your elbow never *was* really sure what the shooting was for.

The motor was turning into the side street, grinding slowly through the crumpled snowdrifts toward the curb before the doctor's door. Chicago snow, yellow and gray and grimy, shoveled by the street sweepers into ungainly heaps on the barren grass plots, soiled with smoke, spotted with soot. Hideous, really, a Chicago winter. Save on those rare days when you stepped out of your door and caught a brand-new snowstorm unaware, great fluffy flakes, floating casually down on street and tree and iron railing, frosting the tops of the limousines and delivery wagons with wet, white icing, bending the bushes in the park under the soft, ponderous burden of the snow. Lovely then — but only for an hour.

Land breezes, too, in early spring, they were nice, blowing the ice flow out into the lake, making and breaking great streaks of blue between the icy islands. But these were fleeting interludes. Otherwise, hideous, really. Yet better than Miami, where she would so soon have to be, opening that absurd Italian villa, all pink plaster and cluttered tile, outlined against a stagey back drop of sand and sea and sky, with those spectacular clusters of palm trees adding the last touch of unreality to the picture. Palms *were* trees, she had to admit, like New England elms and pines, but they always *did* look, as Christopher said, 'false as hell,' suggesting only park green houses and hotel lobbies and altars at church weddings and parlors at house funerals.

Funny to think that the one place she'd like to go to see the winter out was that Vermont village where she'd lived as a girl. Why, she hadn't even seen it in snow time for over thirty years. Bob was a baby when she and Sam had come West. But she could so distinctly recall the little spotless scene of snow and sunshine, glittering beneath the great inverted bowl of stainless sky. The sweep of pine-clad hill above the town. The great crusted curves of the mammoth snowdrifts, burying, here and there, the low stone walls that criss-crossed the rocky pastures. The skeletons of the elm trees on the village street, their bare, drooping boughs dominating the rows of white New England houses that stood, tightly barricaded by storm door and window against the weather, looking just a little gray and dingy, the best of them, against the dazzling background of immaculate snow.

The motor had stopped. Benton was throwing open the door. Funny, as she untangled her feet from the coils of the brown beaver rug, she could just imagine that she and Sam and Bobby were driving up Main Street, in the little black cutter, to her father's house for Sunday tea. She could positively feel the straw under her feet, prickly about her ankles, and smell the pungent odor of the old gray horse blanket around her knees, and hear the jingle of the sleighbells in the winter breeze. See Sam in his old coonskin cap and Bobby in that little red hood she'd knitted for him his second winter. So red their cheeks. So white their breath in the frosty air! Good gracious! Benton was again looking anxious! She rose and said evenly:

'Wait, Benton. I'll not be long. Not more than twenty minutes.'

How long *had* she been, she wondered, on her return, as she stepped dumbly into the motor. How long did it take to change the world completely? To turn one's glance, trying, oh, ever so hard, to keep it even and unafraid, from life to death? Had she known it before she went into the doctor's office? Inevitably known it all those months, when she hadn't told the children about that little pain? Known it, above all, when she *had*, and had read for just one moment, before it was wiped out by the throes of family discussion, a panic fear in their concerned young eyes?

The doctor had hated to tell her. But she'd made him. Hadn't had to make him, really, for, of course, as soon as she'd recognized that reluctance, that hanging back from explicit diagnosis, she'd understood. But she'd got it all out of him. So easily, too, with just a few words about large responsibilities and meeting the future and business arrangements necessary for the head of a family. Even doctors, juggling with life and death, bowed to business arrangements. On the threshold of eternity Sam's millions commanded respect.

She knew that if she'd said she must know for any really important reason, to save her soul, to prepare to meet her God, the doctor would have smiled with all the bright reassurance of his profession and replied, 'Now, Mrs. Dalton, you're tired out and a little hysterical. There's nothing you need to worry about. A little more rest and you'll see it all quite differently.'

But when she had explained that it was a question of forming a trust for the three grandchildren, he had understood at once that this was not a moment for prevarication or mercy. Before the autumn, he'd said. But they'd keep her from pain. Why, he'd give her something for *that* to-day. No use to worry. Take it easy. No reason at all why she shouldn't go to Florida. Best place for her. He'd give her a letter to a big New York specialist in Miami. He'd come himself, like a shot, if she wired.

Kate had read in his eyes, by this time, a flattering respect for the way she was taking it. Curious to be capable of being flattered at such a moment. Why did it seem so ridiculously, so absurdly, important to play the game? To be calm, to be quiet, to achieve, outwardly at least, a certain practical detachment from all the shock and the horror? Egotism, it was, really, nothing more admirable. That consuming inner urge, that would not be denied, to act the heroine, to be applauded, to play the big scene in the grand manner.

It was like something else she'd known. What was it?

Oh, of course! Having the babies. Then again she had felt that intoxicating sense of the stage being supremely hers, of the spotlight beating full upon her. Had known that silly, passionate desire to be thought wonderful in a crisis. To joke with the doctor. To bring a smile to Sammy's strained, anxious face. A little admirable, after all, to rise superior to the event, to assert the supremacy of the spirit in a world of pain and loss and fear. But creating life, that was thrilling, that was glorious. This was different. Meeting death. Had she, with all her discernment, down the perplexed years of living, somehow underestimated the pangs of that ultimate experience?

Eight months to live. Nine months. Possibly ten. Sensational statement. Words you could listen to, words you could utter. But something, somehow, about yourself, you couldn't possibly believe. Sixty years, almost, behind you and eight brief months ahead. Well, it was only a fact that needed facing, like any other. Belief would come later. Practical action — that was what she must count on to get her through the first hard weeks of realization. Doing the next thing that had to be done. That was what had always pulled her through her worst moments.

And now, of course, she had to open that house in Miami. Absurd obligation. But no less real for all its absurdity. Bob was counting on her. Bob was going to have little Robbie there, his first six months of little Robbie, after the divorce of last summer. Lily was counting on her too. Counting on her to see it through. Hating to give up her baby. Distrusting Bob. Looking to Kate to manage it all. To look after Robbie. To see fair play. To keep Bob straight while the child was with him. Horrible, Robbie's position in that broken home. Horrible the position of all the children of divorced parents. Five-year-old Robbie, after his six months with Lily in her gay, lonely little flat, trailing down to Florida, with her and his English nurse, to begin life over again with his father in that pink stucco villa. Trailing back in April to take possession of the brand-new nursery, installed for his benefit in her big town house, only to be snatched up again by Lily on July first for a summer at Biarritz before the lonely little flat engulfed him again. No, she couldn't desert Robbie. She'd have to see Bob through Florida. Next spring, no, she wouldn't think of that. Katherine would take it on, somehow. She and Charles. And Christopher, too, of course. They'd all look after Bob. They'd help with Robbie.

Wonderful, of course, to feel, at fifty-nine, you were so necessary. But hadn't the necessities of these latter years somehow crowded out the pleasures, the satisfactions, the fun? Your children, your grandchildren, they were everything, of course, as you grew older. But still, you, yourself, you did exist as a person. You had your own life. At least you had had, once. Curious to want so much to live it again, just for yourself, at the end.

That Vermont village — strange how it all came back to her. That early life, that previous incarnation, that was so different from the long Middle-Western years that had followed it. If she could just go back, now, alone, for the children wouldn't understand. Not even Christopher, who understood so much. For Sam's millions had made Christopher, intellectually so austere, a sybarite in living. He liked the fleshpots. But she could go back and stop at the little village hotel with its narrow porch, its white Corinthian columns, rising flush from the sidewalk of Main Street. Yes, sleep coldly on a narrow bed, keep up a wood fire in a Franklin stove, light a kerosene lamp, eat those dreadful New England meals of pie and doughnuts and soggy bread and tough meat and pale coffee. But see the seasons through once more.

Know again the green layers of the pine boughs, heavy with snow, the white contours of the granite hill against the sky. The first warm sun of spring, the melting snow, the roaring brooks, the slush, the mud, the buds, the birds. The first arbutus, with its fibrous stem, its small pink blossom and unearthly fragrance, poking up through the pine needles about the reddish brown roots of the pine trees. The springy feeling underfoot of those woodland trails, the uneven quality of the stony paths across the pastures. Maple trees in tiny festive leaf. Violets by the brook's edge. Apple trees, then, of course, leaning crazily over gray stone walls. Lilacs flanking front doors, unused front doors, green-paneled, with bright brass knockers, or trailing their clustered blossoms over the silver sheen of a weathered woodpile. Then daisies and yellow buttercups in the little tip-tilted meadows. Rectangular, walled pastures, brimful of hay. Heat. Ripening apples. Hollyhocks behind picket fences. Goldenrod by the roadside. Trumpet vine twining over the vague dilapidation of shed and outhouse. Bay and sweet fern, redolent in the summer sun. Blueberries on the hilltops.

The hilltops! With a sick surge of realization Kate wondered if, even were she there, she could achieve them in August. Of course it was years since she had climbed them, but it was incredible to feel that she would never again turn from a pasture path into a woodland trail, mount up through flickering sun and shadow to the granite ledges above, feel the purity of the mountain breeze, the exaltation of the height. Look down on the world in every physical and spiritual sense. Then turn and drop down among the bay bushes and forget heroics in the pleasure of eating blueberries. Blueberries as big as your thumb, with the grayish blush of the wind and the rain on them, ripe and sweet and hot in the sun.

Autumn too. You could just look at autumn, from a chair, from a window. You needn't attain the hills. And trees turned first in the lowlands. She could catch the first chill of it if she were lucky. The transforming breath of frost swept over the valleys quite early some Septembers. That sugar maple at the edge of the swamp near the sawmill — it always stood, reflected in the millpond, a flaming torch, an outrider of winter, when all the other trees were green. She could see that, surely, and some spray of scarlet woodbine and a burning bush or two besides.

But, of course, really she couldn't — what with Bob and Robbie and the plaster villa, and Katherine with her plans all made to come down in February with little Kate and Charlie. It would be lovely to have them there, to be all together again. Christopher could come, too, perhaps. Extricate himself for a brief two weeks from the demands of his architect's office and the more tenacious toils of his Cora.

Lovely to have that big family all under one roof, to be surrounded by your own. But she did hope that Katherine's nurse was going to agree with Lily's. Subscribe, at least, to the same general school of thought on diet and routine. That awful winter, two years ago, which really, in retrospect, had seemed to resolve itself into just one long argument as to what hour you lunched your three-year-old and whether or no the spinach should be strained! Well, they were darlings, the grandchildren, worth all the argument and all the nurses. Weren't they just what she supremely needed now? Gay little grandchildren, tumbling about under the ridiculous palm trees, too young ever to have been disappointing. How blessed, after all, to have nothing worse to worry about concerning *them*, at least, than the straining of spinach!

Home again. The motor was stopping. She arose with decision. The game must be played now, even before Sands and Benton. Strange to come back, to enter that familiar door, so different a woman from the one that had left it a brief two hours ago. Ah, there was the clean door curtain behind the iron grill. Good Heavens! She was giving an opera party! She had quite forgotten. In a few minutes too. The street was quite dark. The street lights were blooming palely on their tall standards. She must have been ever so long at the doctor's. She hurried by Sands, oblivious of his veiled concern. Quite lightly she ran up her elliptical stair. The lamps were lighted in her rose-curtained bedroom. Her black chiffon evening gown lay stretched in readiness on the bed. She tossed her furs on the chaise-longue, dropped her wraps beside them, rang for her maid, stepped into her white-tiled bathroom to turn on her hot tub. She had to hurry. But she was glad of that. It would keep her from thinking. Preserve the numb, trancelike feeling that was keeping her, perhaps, from a breakdown. Thought could come later.

'I'll wear *all* my pearls,' she reflected with bravado. 'And, yes, I'll give Katherine the diamond chain to-night.

I'd like to see her wear it. She knows I can't, in mourning. She won't think it queer.' She must make a list of her possessions. She had always meant to. The big pearls for Katherine, of course. The little ones for little Kate. Something for Lily. Yes, she wanted Lily to have something. But she'd give it to her next week when they took Robbie. Not wait, lugubriously, until — the fall. That ruby pin that Sam gave her on their silver-wedding day. That would be just the thing. It was lovely and, somehow, the irony of handing on to Lily, little broken Lily, a silver-wedding present rather pleased her. It would serve as a subtle reminder of the lifelong loyalties of which the sterner stuff of a previous generation had been capable. For surely every marriage, in every generation, was strained, was threatened by the ups and downs of living. The pin matched, too, that absurdly huge ruby engagement ring which Lily had tried to return to Bobby and which he, quite properly, had refused to accept. Katherine said she wore it still sometimes. 'On her right hand, of course,' Katherine, arbiter of the conventions, had gravely added.

'I'm going to rouge to-night — rouge like a flapper!' thought Kate with determination. Yes, and try the little unused lipstick in the gold vanity case that Christopher, laughing lightly, had given her at Christmas. The effect was splendid, she thought, smiling, actually smiling, into her own blue eyes in her mirror. Really, in a pink light, with *all* the pearls, she didn't look a day over — well, forty-nine! Gray, of course, awfully gray. But women turned gray early now. Look at Christopher's Cora, still in the early thirties she was, and yet her little bobbed head was frosted all over like a silver thistledown. So festal and fantastic it always looked, an artifice, like fancy dress, so provocatively out of keeping with the almost childish contours of her little face, the youthful appeal in her blue, dancing eyes. Lovely, Cora, of course, every one thought so, pink and blue and white like a Dresden shepherdess and war-widowed and blameless, but seven years older than Christopher, after all. And not at all the sort of woman, with all her soft sophistication, to do for Christopher, sybaritic Christopher, capable, so perversely of everything or nothing, all that yet remained to be done.

Kate rose. She looked pretty to-night. Really she did. Nice to look nice on this, of all evenings. It helped the morale absurdly. And Raymond was coming. Fred, too, curiously enough, but that was neither here nor there. Strange how still, at fifty-nine, the spark of coquetry in her heart flashed inevitably into flame at the sight, at the thought, of Raymond. Women were queer. Kittle-cattle, the best of them. Twenty-five years she'd spent indomitably endeavoring to forget Raymond, indomitably endeavoring to make him remember her! Ridiculous. Futile on the one hand, unnecessary on the other. Impossible, of course, that she could ever forget, or he not remember. They'd taken it hard, the two of them, thank goodness. She hadn't, at least, on her conscience the idle romance of an empty summer, the vulgarity of futile philandering — in retrospect so trivial and tarnished and trite. For to have felt like that, ever, about any one and then to have forgotten — that would have been the worst of all humiliations. That would have shaken the foundations of everything.

Loving couldn't hurt you. Loving any one. Only what you did about it. Loving ought always to help. How passionately she'd tried to explain that to Raymond. Had he ended by understanding? Had she understood, really, herself? What you did about it counted in one way, supremely. It showed you up. But in another, more spiritual sense, did it matter really at all? Hadn't she felt from the moment that she'd faced the fact of her feeling for Raymond that she'd thrown her cap over the windmill? She hadn't run off with him — but, oh, how she'd wanted to! It was the wanting to that counted, that surge of emotion that had made her, in his arms for that moment, in that moonlit garden, horribly, ecstatically, his, not Sammy's. When she knew that she'd like to, she'd crossed the Rubicon. A flaming sentence of de Maupassant had flashed into her mind at the moment, 'Voilà, je suis une femme perdue!' And she had been, really, for all that she'd stayed in the traces. The quality of the emotion. That was the thing that counted.

'Mother?' It was Katherine's voice on the stairway. 'You're late.' It was Katherine's disapproving presence in the door. Handsome, wholesome Katherine, charming in silver brocade.

'No, dear. You're early. I'm so glad.' Kate kissed her pink cheek. 'I want to give you this. I'll never wear it again. I'd like you to have it.'

'Why, *mother!* Mother, how lovely!' Katherine's tranquil face beamed with delight. 'How sweet of you! How darling!' No awkward questions. No vain surmising. Wonderful how easy at times, if how difficult at others, a lack of imagination in your offspring did make things! 'Come down and show Charles. He'll be *so* pleased.'

Kate slipped her arm around Katherine's slim waistline. How lithe the firm young muscles felt beneath the soft silken drapery! How adorable the three small freckles were that always lasted over from the tennis courts of summer to those of Florida on Katherine's determined little nose! How lovely to be young! How lovely to have the young about you! Strange what it did to her just to look at Katherine, catch the reassuring practicality of her matter-of-fact little mind. It made the visit to the doctor seem just a bad dream. It couldn't be true. Not when she and Katherine, in spite of the devastation of that revelation, could be together, so exactly, the same.

Charles was in the drawing-room under Sam's portrait.

Charles in his early thirties, immaculate in evening dress, courteously awaiting her permission to smoke, so safe, so sane. Really so good-looking, if a forehead heightened above the temples and a rounded waistline *did* prophesy, direly, what he would some day, not so far off, become.

Sam's portrait looking down on them. Sargent had so enjoyed that portrait. And Kate, after a loyal moment of vague alarm, had so enjoyed his enjoyment! Sam looking like Daniel Webster, awfully New England, indomitably Vermont, lean and distinguished — yet somehow so laughably prosperous. That faint gold high light that was his Phi Beta Kappa key dangling ironically on the well-cut waistcoat. How had Sargent done it? Made you know that suit was so new, that chair so luxurious, that imposing façade, seen dimly in the background, nothing more exalted than an apotheosis of a stock exchange? Kate had almost expected him to sketch in a family Bible, dominated by a ticker, on the table at Sam's elbow. Had resolved to protest if he did. But he didn't — nothing so crude! 'Transplanted,' she'd always called it in private.

A step on the stair. Here were Fred and Ida. Fat, funny Ida, ridiculously poured into the purple sheen of that Poiret model! Always the same, perennially youthful, triumphantly rising, by sheer force of gayety, above the devastating ravages of time. Irrepressible Ida, silencing Fred, silencing the roomful by the clamor of her entrance! Good gracious! Had Ida, ever so delicately, begun to touch up her raven hair? Wasn't there just a glint of henna? Or was it the light? Cheerful old Ida, jollying Charles, who wasn't too easy to jolly!

How mean of her to notice! Thoughts were wicked. You couldn't control them. Thoughts were like naughty children. Indecent! Rebellious! They noticed everything and blurted right out to you so much that you'd rather never have known! Fred looked blooming, chatting with Katherine. Good old friends! She felt her spirits rising. She loved a party. Why, it *couldn't* be true — the doctor's revelation. Not when just the sight of Fred and Ida could so snap her out of her gloom.

Here was Sands with the cocktails. The vermouth *had* lasted. And a riot on the stairs that could only mean that the boys were coming down from their rooms on the third story for their engagements of the evening. Bob in the doorway, bluff, blond, and a little heavy, still in his tweeds, bound for some place, Kate thought helplessly, that it were better he stayed home from. Christopher behind him, tall and dark and slim, a gardenia in the buttonhole, just a shade too much the dandy, a bit *too* Valentino, in evening dress. She knew where *he* was off to!

They clustered about the cocktails. Clustered about Ida, laughing, joking, giving her a whirl. Nice boys, both of them. Sweet with older people. Fond of each other. Fond of Katherine. The family would hang together. Not disintegrate, like so many, with the passing of the older generation. Bob would have help, always. If he'd only take it.

She turned quickly. Raymond was at her elbow. Raymond smiling down at her with that little look behind a look that had lingered so touchingly for the last quarter-century in his quiet, appraising eyes. She smiled back at him. Let him see for a moment that she thought it touching. That she was touched. Why not, this evening? When she had such a funny feeling of looking at her life as a finished story. This, incredibly, was the last chapter. Here, with her old friends, and the children, and Raymond. This was where she was, so beautifully, at the end.

Sands announcing dinner. Katherine murmuring impatiently that Galli-Curci was singing. The boys taking their uproarious departure. The little party proceeding gayly under the crystal chandelier through the Georgian corridor, irrepressible Ida calling something naughty and noisy over the bannisters to the boys.

Kate cast an appraising eye over her dinner table. Charming, as always. Sands had a gift with flowers. Tall candelabra, creamy Wedgwood, Victorian glass, ornately cut, that somehow she could never bear to abandon for the brilliant modern fashion of garish color. She remembered too well the day she had picked it out, some thirty years ago, in quite a little flutter of excitement at the thought that it was quite all right — that Sam was now, incredibly, in a position to pay for all those glittering dozens.

Fred at her right hand, unfolding his napkin. Charles at her left. Raymond opposite, where she could look at him across the candle-light. Funny, that to-night of all nights, he and Fred should both be there. They often were, of course. She'd never thought before how odd it was, representing, as they did, the lives she might have chosen. Fred, now, of course, never remembered. Forty years ago! Why should he? And certainly she'd never stretched out her hand to prevent *him* from forgetting anything it was more comfortable not to recall!

Fred was telling them the last political scandal. Charles was deeply interested. Something about the municipal slush fund. Fred was dabbling in politics these latter years. Some thought, with his millions, he'd end in the Senate. Probably he would if these slush fund investigations didn't become too personal. How Ida would love it! She loved to be grand.

Fred would never seem grander, however, even under the dome of the Capitol, than he had the day she first saw him, forty years ago on a Vermont hillside. He'd come home from Dartmouth with Sammy for a Christmas vacation of winter sports. Twenty-one, the boys were, and she just nineteen, and already half in love with Sammy, who was so wholly in love with her. Fred thought she was lovely. Really he did. It was love at first sight. And she, she was awfully flattered. A man from Chicago, forty years ago in that remote village, might as well have been a man from Mars! A young Lochinvar had come out of the West, like a fairy tale, like a ballad.

What a fortnight they'd had on the hills and the millpond, among the Vermont snowdrifts. And what a wooing had followed! Flowers and books and boxes of candy, all the way from Boston! But somehow that was just what put her off him. He seemed so alien, so prosperous, so remote from the thrifty Vermont life she knew so well. Those years with her father in that little white house on Main Street. Those sacred duties of domesticity, the dusting and sweeping, the bedmaking, and baking, the washing of her grandmother's Lowestoft teacups in the sink by the kitchen pump. The reading of the Concord philosophers around the family lamp in the evening. The Emersonian tradition, her father had called it.

She'd really taken Sammy because he was threadbare. A minister's son who had never betrayed to her, all those five years that they waited to marry, the slightest ambition to rise above a local law practice. It was on Fred's suggestion, when Bobby was two years old, that Sam had decided to move West. How good they had been to them, Fred and Ida, when first they were settled in that little South Side boarding-house, Sam so busy and she with Bobby, and Katherine coming. She'd loved Ida at once.

Almost at once. For, at the first glance, even at twenty-eight, Ida had seemed excessively — well, un-Vermont!

The mushroom soup had been good. Was the filet a little below par? Sands *was* rushing them through. He had such a conscience about the opera. Just like Katherine! Good Lord! How politics bored her! But she didn't have to talk. Not even to listen. Fred was quite happy with Charles for an audience. And Ida hadn't yet given either Raymond or Katherine a chance to utter a word. How she could keep it up! But always amusing. Amusing Raymond this minute. Amusing him awfully. Lovely looking, Raymond, Kate thought, across the candle-light, with that cameo profile, worn now like old ivory, and that ethereal expression of the spirit shining through. A head from some Greek coin, poised with what flaming distinction on his thin professorial shoulders. A pagan head in repose. It was the smile that was spiritual.

Had she ruined his life? Her passion for understatement, that was Vermont in its essence, mocked at the melodrama of that conventional phrase. Lives weren't ruined by others. Struggling even with love and renunciation, it was up to you to make or mar your own. His gray hair looked so blond in the candle-light. The same little ripple above his ear. Just as it did that summer. Men *didn't* change like women. Life *didn't* play its grotesque jokes on them.

Kate viewed her salad with distaste. That alligator pear wasn't an entirely happy thought on the cook's part. She'd have to live on them for three months in Florida. Horrid things, tasting just like soap, with a little French dressing! But Katherine loved them. She'd forgotten Galli-Curci in the pleasure of lingering. It was distressing Sands. Ah, here was the ice. And Katherine masterfully suggesting, 'Let's have coffee at the table, Mother.' They would. It was 'Traviata.' She loved a good old hurdy-gurdy opera. And 'Traviata' was the best of all.

Katherine *did* have the bit in her teeth this evening. Why, she hardly gave Ida time to finish her gold-tipped cigarette, under the disapproving stare of Sam's portrait. Like Sam himself, under the discipline of the younger generation, that portrait must countenance much that it could not entirely condone. Cigars for the men were obviously out of the question. Kate could imagine Fred relinquishing his with a sigh! In a moment, almost, Katherine had marshaled them all into the Georgian entry. 'Galli-Curci is singing,' she was explaining with the sweet reasonableness that Katherine's family, at least, knew was not to be gainsaid.

Ida was gorgeous in ermine. Raymond just a thought shabby in his threadbare ulster. Curious, thought Kate, as she descended her icy steps once more, clinging gratefully to his elbow, the power that a shiny coatsleeve had to stir her heart. Sparsely and sparely she should have lived her life. Sam had betrayed her by turning everything to gold. Forty years ago, compared to Fred, how out-at-elbows he'd looked. But that latent Midas touch of his had made them as like as two peas in the end.

The motor was waiting. The motor would be crowded. No, Fred, ignoring all protests, was climbing up beside Benton. Kate shrewdly suspected him of having salvaged that cigar. Nice to sink down in the darkness, in the crack beside Ida. Tired she felt, awfully. But all evening, no pain. That was excitement. Wonderful really how she was carrying it off. But she'd close her eyes now for a moment. If Raymond *did* see in the light of a street lamp. Raymond would guess, Raymond would know, of course, before any one. Before even Christopher.

It would be frightful for Raymond. She understood. The last curtain on his personal drama. The passing of romance. Marvelous, unbelievable, to have meant all that to him. From the day they first met, when she was so conscientiously showing the children the starfish in the Marine Laboratory at Woods Hole. What a Greek god he'd looked to her, the slim young zoölogist they'd surprised at his microscope! And so charming, so eager, so endearingly threadbare! From Chicago too. How funny they'd never met. Of course she didn't know many University people. Stupid of her not to! What a summer had followed. Sam back in Chicago, making — it must have been about his third million. How guilelessly they'd slipped into it, without thought or foreboding, through happy companionship, through books and talk and laughter.

Why, the children were there every minute, on the beach, in the garden. She could see them now, Bob in his last sailor suits, Katherine with her fat pigtails, Christopher, funny little black-headed mite, trotting about in his yellow rompers. Raymond at her elbow, clever, companionable, never alarming, just being, ever so enchantingly — well, just what he was! How aghast they both were at the final revelation! How they'd tried to ignore it, deny it, leave it unspoken! How bewildered by what was for both of them a shattering awakening, to the devastating complexity of life!

Well, here was the opera. Charles was being effective with the tickets. They were late. No crowd. Just the straggling box-owners. And the first trills of the aria closing the first act as they ascended the stairs. An obsequious usher, pulling a red velvet curtain. The darkened auditorium. Ida rustling to her seat. Katherine sinking reproachfully into hers. The brilliant stage. The little figure that was Galli-Curci alone, well up by the footlights, the familiar crinoline, the festooned camellias, the golden voice.

The curtain descended. The prima donna took her encores. The fat little tenor showed up to share the glory.

Katherine murmured forgivingly, 'You shouldn't have had salad.' The lights flashed up. The horseshoe was half empty, boxes slowly filling. Katherine was right, as usual, if a little insistent. Lovely the opera. Disgusting of people not to prefer it to food! Light chatter from her dinner party. Ida nodding and becking, calling her jocosities to the adjacent boxes. Fred talking critically of the management's deficit. Gloomily prophesying that they would call on the guarantors for one hundred per cent. Charles being practical and sagacious. 'What opera needs everywhere is fewer artists and better salesmen. A good business man at the head to sell it to the community at cost.' How funny! How familiar! The Chicago capitalist, affable, affluent, open-handed, but a bit bewildered, stonily confronting an art.

The curtain was rising. The familiar garden. The great second act of 'Traviata.' The one she always loved. Kate settled herself in her seat with a little sigh of pleasure at the opening bars of the orchestra. She could feel Raymond's eyes upon her in the darkness. How lovely to have him there! The story proceeded. Love among the roses. The tenor departed. The father appeared, a figure of doom and foreboding, at the garden gate.

Well, she was a little on his side, reflected Kate, with humor and a thought for Christopher and Cora. Life wasn't as simple as opera. She pictured herself advancing, to measured music, upon Cora in her little French parlor, pleading in a burst of irresistible melody for Christopher's salvation. Too bad it just wasn't done. For she felt she could quite throw herself into the rôle!

Ah, but now, she was all for the lovers! The great duet was over. Galli-Curci, willowy in her billowing ruffles, had waved the father off into the wings, had turned, all set for sacrifice, toward the inkpot and the fatal, feathered quill. That voice, that music, that agony of renunciation! Didn't she know? Didn't she understand? Hadn't she been through it all that summer night, in her little seaside bedroom, at Woods Hole? She remembered now how her little ivory pen, rusted by the damp sea-breezes, had spluttered as she wrote those broken words to Raymond of passion and farewell.

Of course, after that evening in his arms in the garden, that never-to-be-forgotten evening of promises and protestation, she hadn't just clapped on a picture hat and rushed off in distraction under an arch of roses. Life wasn't like that. No, she had gone up to her rooms in a dumb, trancelike ecstasy of emotion. The joy of loving and being loved had built a wall around her, as if by enchantment, through which she felt no other thought, no other consideration, could ever possibly break. And there in her room was Katherine, brown, plump, little Katherine, five-year-old Katherine, sleeping hot and damp and tumbled, her brown hair straggling over the pillow, her little freckled nose wrinkling adorably as she wriggled in the sudden flood of light. And just beyond the flimsy door was Bobby. And Christopher, sleeping with old Sadie, across the hall.

Frightful, unfair, life, to put such choices up to a woman. To choose between two men! Why, that was easy! Sam didn't figure in her consideration at all that evening. He'd played the game and lost. That was quite simple. All sympathy for Sam, in the turn events had taken, was overwhelmed by the flood of pity that surged up for Raymond at the very thought that they could possibly have taken any other. But to choose between Raymond and the children! Why, it was inconceivable! There was no common unit of measure in the human heart to weigh such different loyalties. Then suddenly in the turmoil conviction came to her. There *was* no choice. Not for her, at any rate. You were as God made you. The children were helpless. And they were her life.

No, she hadn't clapped on a picture hat and rushed off in distraction. Nothing so easy. She had waked up Sadie, incredulous Sadie, and briefly informed her that they were leaving by the early morning train. Had packed five trunks, wrapped up the books from the circulating library, written the laundry to send on the wash, the post office to forward the mail. And then in a dream, a nightmare, had sat down at quite four in the morning to write to Raymond the little there was to write. Sadie had given notice next week in Chicago. From the moment of that midnight awakening, Kate knew, conscientious Sadie had always considered her completely unbalanced.

The curtain was falling. Fred and Charles were quietly absconding, murmuring vain words about a cigar. Woman's proverbial intuition sensed a hip flask somewhere about them. New men appeared around the crimson curtain. Katherine's contemporaries, clustering gayly about her. Ida monopolizing them. Raymond saying gently, 'You're tired to-night, Kate. Why not leave early?' She shook her head reassuringly. Why, she never felt better. Darkness fell on Raymond's incredulity.

The lighted stage again. The act she never cared so much for. Gay, though. Brilliant, hurdy-gurdy Verdi. But the vindictive frenzy of the Italian tenor always seemed a little stagey, a trifle absurd. Men weren't like that. Or were they? Not her men, anyway. Fred and Sam and Raymond. Perfect, all of them, always. Raymond was wonderful. Why had he cherished no resentment. Raymond had no children. How *could* he understand? Raymond understood everything. Without words. Without warning. Raymond was infallible. He sensed the finest distinctions. The most ephemeral thought. How had he known enough, since Sam's death, never to have pressed a marriage? To feel with her that people such as they, who had loved and lost with such tragic desperation in the early thirties, didn't marry, grotesquely, at fifty-nine. Marry, absurdly, surrounded by incredulous offspring and bouncing grandchildren. Accept as mendicants, from the condescending hands of Destiny, something so much less good than they could have taken for themselves. No, Raymond's dramatic sense for living equaled her own. For him, too, was quite impossible a ridiculous anticlimax to that early dream.

The act was wearing on. The insult had been given. The lady of the camellias was swooning in the arms of her confidant, the familiar strains of the most famous of all the arias was floating through the vast upper reaches of the old Auditorium to heaven's gates. Fred and Charles were returning to the box a little shame-facedly. A healthy masculine aroma of smoke and whisky clinging robustly about them. The curtain descended.

She *was* tired. Raymond was right. The clamor of the intermission annoyed her, making demands upon her superficial attention. Short, though, always, this last one. As soon as the curtain calls were over, the curtain was rising. Leaving her again, alone with thought, in the grateful dark. The stage was set for tragedy. The dimlit bedroom, the bed in the alcove, the chaise-longue and soft velvet mantle waiting by the fire for the last duet. Nothing left now for the broken heroine, draped in white chiffon, but to die in the arms of her repentant lover.

Curious that she didn't want to die in Raymond's. But she didn't. Didn't want him to connect her with the sordid incapacities of illness, the absorbing egoism of pain. Better, how much better, to fade away like a shadow, pass, imperceptibly, with no rude shock of actuality, from a dream to a memory. Be for Raymond, always, the woman in the doorway, the figure on the threshold of something he could not attain.

Too tired she was, too, for death scenes and protestations. The children and Raymond, the weariness of thinking and planning and worrying for others! How she'd like to evade it all! Slip away to the austerity of that Vermont village, with the comforting reflection that her life, for others, was over. That there was nothing she could be expected to do about it now. She'd like to be buried there, beside the little white church, whose spotless steeple, ignoring the compromising complexities of life, pointed an undeviating path to heaven from that granite hill.

But no, she'd have to lie beside Sam, of course, in the marble mausoleum in Graceland, under the shadow of the elevated railway, with the sound of the Clark Street trolley, if it were not mercifully stifled in the silence of eternity, forever in her ears. Funeral wreaths, tuberoses, purple bows on doorbells. A funeral just like Sammy's, undoubtedly, if Katherine were planning it. Impossible, of course, even to ask for that little neglected grave on the hillside. Impossible to lie forever, under waving grasses, with only the gentle companionship of sun and wind and rain.

The curtain was falling on Galli-Curci's still white figure, on the sympathetic shadows of father, maid, and doctor, on the little tenor's frantic impersonation of despair. The audience was stirring, applause lost in movement, lights flashing on, the box party coming to life. Ida growing voluble, Katherine articulate, the men ducking for overcoats. Raymond placed her evening wrap about her shoulders and Kate leaned a moment, tenderly, against his encircling arm. But before her eyes still rose the familiar slope of that pine-clad hillside, tranquil under the purity of New England sky. Not even Raymond's touch, Raymond's eyes could, at that moment, quite recall her from that inner vision.

The October sun was shining brightly down on the little group of mourners, as Katherine, draped in impeccable black, her little pink face flushed and swollen with tears, turned from the wreath-decked door of the marble mausoleum and preceded Charles and her brothers into the family limousine. Cora, in mourning, maintaining every standard set for a daughter-in-law, was already seated there. Charles and Christopher solemnly followed them. Bob would sit outside, with a sustaining cigarette, at Benton's elbow.

'Don't the flowers look lovely?' said Katherine, with a last sad glance from the window. 'Wasn't the church beautiful? Just as Mother would have liked to have it. And all of us around her. Oh, Cora, I'm so glad you hurried the wedding so that she could see it. I know it made her happy to feel Christopher was settled before she — went.'

'I hope it did.' Christopher's glance at Cora was a trifle equivocal. The tilt of Cora's eyebrow a bit ironic.

'Did you notice Lily?' she asked irrelevantly. 'She came up to the cemetery.'

Christopher cast an apprehensive glance at Bob's broad shoulder. But the glass was down. It was quite discreet.

'She looked awfully cut-up,' he said. 'In deep mourning.'

'Just black,' said Katherine absently. 'Her stockings were French nude.'

'No, dear.' Cora's voice was eager. 'You couldn't see through your veil. I noticed them particularly. They were black. That sheerest weight of evening chiffon.'

'Were they, really?' Katherine looked pleasurably excited. She, too, cast a glance, this time of calculating romance, at Bob's unconscious figure. 'She had on Mother's ruby. But that might have been sentiment. Why, Cora! I've just realized! She had Bob's engagement ring on her left hand!'

But Charles had no interest in the sentimental preoccupations of the eternal feminine.

'They keep this place up well,' he said, as they rolled decorously through the iron gates.

'Yes,' said Katherine practically. 'That's what you pay for. What they guarantee in their little booklet. I always like their phrase — perpetual care. And it always makes me think of Mother. Just what she gave us. You know Mother never had a thought for herself. Funny to think of any one like Mother — never caring to have *any* life of her own.'

BLUE CLAY[1]

PHYLLIS BOTTOME

I WAS perilously near forty, and the only thing I liked about it was the immunity I felt from wanting to affect the destinies of others. I do not say that people no longer interested me, but I knew in a flash the particular specimens who wouldn't; and if I was let in rather more deeply than I cared for over the singular case of Sylvia Cartwright, I had at least the consolation of knowing that her case was singular, and that if one had anything to do with her at all one was bound to be let in. What she broke down in me — and I have never been able to piece it together since — was an increasing self-complacence. I wrote myself; and my world thought that I was a genius. I do not think I ever went as far as this myself, but I was a little too satisfied with what I called 'my work,' and I thought sophistication, tactful amenities, witty phrases, and the outward beauty of pleasantly absorbed privileges were compatible with masterpieces. I congratulated myself upon giving entertainments which were considered rather more amusing than other people's, upon a marriage which I knew to be more successful than the generality of marriages, and above all,

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I flattered myself upon the skill with which I handled my artists, so that I kept the cream of them for my guests, and yet never involved any one who met them with the pecuniary or conventional embarrassment so often to be found in an artist's private life. I think I had not recognised that my artists were not different in kind from myself. They were merely people — who had, from luck or privilege, bounded with enough aplomb to be noticed, into the lack-lustre and overstocked arena of the creative world. 'Of course what they find in you,' my friends observed, 'is fellow feeling. It must be so wonderful to be an artist yourself.' The greatest of my artists was most certainly old Antonio Rosselli, and I was pleased when he said he wanted to paint my portrait because I had a face which perfectly represented to him the purest type of an English gentlewoman. 'You have,' he said, 'the head of a Reynolds — of a Romney. It is exactly what I want to catch — the contrast!' 'The contrast?' I asked interestedly; 'with whom are you going to contrast me, Signor Maestro?' 'A little image in my mind,' Antonio murmured. 'But it has nothing to do with you that — you would not understand.' I smiled patiently. Signor Rosselli was very famous, and very famous people can afford to tell almost any one that they do not understand.

I went to his studio for my first sitting on one of those golden Roman afternoons, when the flowers in the street seem twice as large and three times as brilliant as they seem anywhere else; and light and air have become an indissoluble substance which passes into the blood.

The big bare studio was half empty, and across a sea of light I met the eyes of Rosselli's last portrait, and knew that I was looking at one of the great portraits of the world. Eyes can only look at you like that out of a picture when the artist has got not only his subject into his soul but his very soul into his subject. Velasquez's Pope is the best illustration of what I mean. It is not only Innocent the Tenth who looks out of the canvas with those astute and penetrating eyes; Velasquez is there too, measuring you as he measured Innocent the Tenth; immortally at work upon human substances.

Antonio Rosselli's portrait was of a little modern girl. Rosselli hadn't bothered much about her square mop of bobbed hair — it made a good enough setting for that mysterious face, and was, one could see, as conventional to him as the bend of a gold wing behind one of Fra Angelico's angels; he had spent himself on her eyes, grey and a little misty. I think they were the most innocent eyes I ever saw, but the word innocence is flat and insignificant to express the quality of surprise in them. It was as if she was looking unprepared and, for the first time, into the pit of life. Most of us never see the real world at all; it is blocked off from us by the padding of security. The tingling, actual quality of life comes to us like the echo of the sea in a shell, through our jaded senses. You saw in the eyes of this girl that she had never known security, and that her senses were played upon by reality, without the interposition of a single sham. The expression in her eyes was deeper than sorrow, and beyond mere panic (though I think there was fear in it). She was just mortally interested; and careless, beyond any limit of personal courage, for her own safety. The vivid face had no dignity, no self-respect, and above all no self-consciousness. All her consciousness, and I was to learn later how intense it was, was out upon the path of her curiosity. Yet they were beautiful tender eyes, the whole upper part of her face under its fringe of straight gold hair was as exquisite and mild as one of the *cinquecento* Madonnas. It left me quite unprepared for the brutal, ruthless shock of a mouth beneath — a mouth in which the teeth were too large and shining, like the teeth of a hungry animal.

'O!' I cried, 'Maestro, what a pity you made the lower part of her face so ugly!'

'*Ma* —' laughed the Maestro, '*è brutto!* I am not God, my delightful Lady Marian! I paint what I see, but I won't be responsible for the object. I painted that *poverina* as I saw her. But! I admit it, one hasn't always such a face to paint! I saw a great deal.'

We dropped the subject, and Rosselli ran back and forth from the middle of the room to his easel with his paint-brush poised like a weapon, stabbing at his canvas with curious precision and eyes fixed like a gimlet. He hardly looked at me at all, except to see that the light was as he wanted it — I believe he saw my face on the canvas more plainly than he saw me in my chair.

His portrait of me is considered one of his best, but I was never pleased with it myself. There was something in the face, or rather a lack of something, which I found disconcerting. The picture was graceful, dignified, even, I must admit, beautiful, but it was a beauty that had been used over and over again.

'I can't see that I am in the portrait at all,' I complained to my husband when we were alone with the picture. 'It is more like a pattern than a person!'

But my husband was enthralled by it. 'No, no!' he said, 'Rosselli was right! He told me when it was finished that he had succeeded in making a portrait of a perfect lady — of a perfect English lady — all the poise, the culture, the — the immaculateness, and, by Jove, he's done it! And I'm jolly proud it's you!'

Of course one likes one's husband to be proud of one — but I had a curious chill when he used the word immaculate. It made me think suddenly of those very stiff wooden dolls we used to play with as children on Sundays, when we weren't allowed to play with any of our real toys.

It was two years before we returned to Rome. My husband had been appointed to the Embassy, and, while he was attending to his last duties in Greece, I went to the best hotel I could find until my household was complete. I had as quiet a room as Rome provides, and was waiting for the interminable noises of the streets to die down before going to bed, when I became aware of rather a marked disturbance going on in the room below me. Somebody was shouting and knocking furniture about; there were screams which sounded like drunken screams, snatches of wavering songs, one or two men's voices, and then the sound of a heavy crash and footsteps rushing along the passage. It was not the sort of hotel in which such noises occur without a very serious cause. I therefore went to my door and opened it. I saw the manager, with a white scared face, dash down the passage, and after a few moments the sounds ceased, except for a peculiar singsong chant which sagged on, like the moaning of a drug fiend. A moment later a knock came at my door. It was the manager himself, usually a big flushed person with a gracefully deprecating swagger; he was now as dishevelled and crumpled as if he had been passed through a mangle. He couldn't, he assured me in a breaking voice, apologise enough! Such a thing had never! — but never! — happened in his hotel before! It was not possible, he had supposed, for it to happen! And he was in despair, he was incapacitated with horror at the disturbance for his guests. Two men — drunk — one renowned

— he had turned out on the spot! A great Roman name — but no matter, he was in the gutter now — and it was the place for him — momentarily, at any rate! But the lady! The lady was not only drunk — she had no clothes on! He apologised profoundly for mentioning such a fact! But she not only had no clothes on — she was English! Was it conceivable that such a thing could happen? An English lady without clothes, and who refused, quite simply refused, to put them on. He said nothing about her having thrown a clothes-brush at him, but could he — dare he — in that condition turn her out? And would she stop singing if he didn't? He threw himself upon my mercy! What *was* he to do? The lady was young, presumably mad, and he had given her a beautiful room because he was told she was a great poet and would bring him distinction. This was the distinction she was bringing him! Even the Italians complained; and when Italians complain of noise it is because it *is* noise! Probably all the other nationalities would leave the hotel tomorrow. He implored me to tell him what to do!

'Why do you come to me?' I asked severely.

'Because,' said the manager, wringing his hands, 'you are English, gracious lady! Surely in your high position you would not like one of your own compatriots to be turned out in such a condition at two o'clock in the morning! A great writer! A great poet! Would it not be a sacrilege? It occurred to me that perhaps you would most graciously consent to see the young lady and to persuade her in her own tongue to reassume her clothes so that she could be turned out? — or at least to keep quiet, so that we could postpone turning her out until the morning!'

If there is one thing I dislike more than being asked what other people should do, it is being told what I should do myself. I felt outraged with the manager and was about to tell him so, when the knocking downstairs began again, and the wavering bars of a street song called 'Nostalgia' rose upon the air. The manager put his hands up to his hair and literally pulled some of it out. I had often heard of this emotional reaction; but I had never witnessed it before. Like most descriptions of unusual behaviour I found the mental image misleading. Very little of the manager's hair came out, although he pulled at it forcibly for some time.

'Very well,' I said resignedly, 'I will go down and see what I can do, but please send my maid Marguerite after me with my opera cloak. What is the number of the room?'

I need not have asked. Four chambermaids, three boys usually associated with buttons, and the night porter, were picturesquely grouped outside the door. I dismissed them with some sharpness, knowing that they would return directly my back was turned, knocked and entered.

To say that the room was in disorder would be to be-little fact. There was not an object, except the bed, where it had a right to be, or devoting itself to the office for which it was made. The wardrobe lolled against a smashed window having disgorged its contents upon the floor. The dressing-table was locked in a death grapple with a chest of drawers. The contents of the washstand were under the table. Clothes, champagne bottles, the claws of lobsters, and liqueur glasses were heaped confusedly together on rather a good Axminster carpet. No chair remained upright. Crouched upon a small sofa with her hands crossed under her feet, swinging gently to and fro, and without a stitch of clothing to cover her, was the original of Rosselli's portrait. I should have known her anywhere, and this, I suppose, is a tribute to her originality, for there are very few people I should know anywhere without their clothes on, at two o'clock in the morning.

Her eyes still held their curious innocence of regard. It was as if nothing that had happened to her had really touched her at all. Marguerite followed me, disapproving, as only a really good maid can disapprove, of the usual. She had my ermine opera cloak over her arm, and her expression would have been suitable for the Day of Judgment.

'Place the cloak over this person's shoulders,' I said, 'and now go and bring me some very strong black coffee.'

'Miladi!' replied Marguerite. 'This is a hotel. There will be no kitchen fire in the middle of the night, and how am I to find coffee?'

'I do not know,' I said, 'but the whole staff is in the passage, and you will bring me the coffee in twenty minutes, very strong and boiling hot.'

'Then you aren't an earthquake?' my hostess remarked slowly and indistinctly; 'if you aren't an earthquake, what are you doing in my room?'

'Please keep that cloak on,' I said, 'until I find something of your own fit to wear. My name is Lady Marian Trefusis. Have you any nightgowns?'

'No,' the creature said with sudden meekness; 'I've pawned them all. I had lovely ones once.'

Then she was sick. The girl was not only drunk, she was worn out with drugs and starvation. I could see that she was feverish, and there seemed nothing to do but make the bed (which had Shakespeare's 'Sonnets,' a fountain pen, and a pink satin heel in it) and put her into it. She lay quite still, and seemed to like the sensation. She was slim without being gawky. I once saw a study by Whistler of a model of fourteen, leaning against a table in the rest hour, which was exactly like her. Her painted slash of a mouth contradicted, without effacing, the startling innocence of her eyes.

'You had one man here or two?' I asked, picking up an overturned chair and drawing it nearer the bed. 'I suppose you know such entertainments are not usual in the best hotels, and that you will be turned out to-morrow?'

I wondered which of the two beings who inhabited her would answer me; her eyes fixed on mine had a curious expression, as if they looked at me out of another world. I have been liked and disliked in my time, but I don't remember ever having been looked at by any one else, as if I didn't exist.

'I shan't be so tired then, I expect,' she murmured slowly. 'I'd forgotten about the bed. It's quite comfortable without those things in it. I had first one man, and then a friend I'd met at a café turned up. I'd forgotten I'd told him to come. It went all right at first, but men get so rough when they're drunk.'

I stop here, not because she did; on the contrary, she raised her little bobbed head from the pillow and gave a pictorial but perfectly unprintable account of what men were like when they were drunk. I think Rabelais would have shrunk from some of the details.

'It is strange,' I said when she had finished, 'that since you hate men so much you should ask them to come and see you?'

'Not really,' she murmured drowsily; 'you see things then. You don't know what I get out of hating! I'm tired of love by itself.' And then she buried her small golden head in the pillow and fell asleep.

Marguerite brought the black coffee, and I took some myself and kept the rest hot in an electric cooker. Marquerite suggested a little sourly that she should take my place. But I refused her offer, and sent her off to bed. I felt that to sit there in that dishevelled room with a drunken poet was an experience I should hardly be likely to have again. 'You see things then,' I repeated over to myself. What did she mean that she saw? Immature, inexperienced, blankly ignorant of all the laws of the civilised world, how could she claim this special insight out of an experience so plainly sordid? What was there to see, except men behaving like animals and broken glass upon the floor? Yet she claimed that she had seen something which I could not see!

She slept until five o'clock in the morning, and then she woke shivering. I gave her some black coffee, and wondered if she was going to cry. She was no longer drunk, and she looked rather woe-begone, but I was thankful to perceive she meant to refrain from tears. She took my presence for granted, and, as soon as she had finished drinking her coffee, she asked for a pad and her fountain pen. I found the pad after some difficulty in a hatbox full of dirty evening gloves. Once more I enveloped her in my opera cloak, with an anxious eye to the ermine, and for two hours she wrote, her shock of hair shading her little pointed face, the electric light resting on her rather ugly, swift-moving finger and thumb. I sat and watched her with a curious sensation. It couldn't, of course, have been envy. She looked like a tool used by an invisible hand. I never saw any human being work more relentlessly; her fingers skimmed from side to side of the paper with the ease and swiftness of a circling bird. When she paused (and occasionally she took a very long pause), she held herself as fixed as a creature about to spring, every nerve taut, every sense listening; the release came as punctually, as completely, as the suspension.

At seven o'clock the noises of the hotel began, sloppy, sordid noises, bumps on doors, and the ineffectual scraping of brooms down corridors. She stopped writing suddenly and flung her pen down on the sheet. I had no time to take it from her before a trail of ink had crossed the linen and reached the ermine on my cuff. 'Shall I read it to you?' she asked me, and without waiting for an answer she lifted a husky, unresonant little voice into a kind of chant, and I heard the poem.

It was that unforgettable, nerve-racking poem which was afterwards called 'A Night in Rome.' But I have never, beautiful as it is, quite recaptured the feeling I had when I heard it first. In that squalid room the words rose to such heights and plumbed such bitter depths. It is the saddest poem in the world, and out of her blistered lips, with her feverish hand resting on the stained sheets, it sounded sadder still. I felt tears on my cheeks at the end of it, and saw them running down her own.

'I think it's nearly all right,' she whispered, 'don't you?

but I've got such an awfully sore throat! — and my eyes feel full of dust!'

She had tonsillitis and eventually pneumonia. I took her immediately to the hospital of the Blue Nuns, and behaved, I suppose, properly about her. I don't know what she'd done with her relations, but if she'd ever had any, they were not forthcoming. Several men turned up (one I knew) and shamefacedly admitted an acquaintance that they didn't explain. They wanted to do something for her, and one of them, who was in touch with an editor, got him to take the poem. I copied it out myself and chose the title, because she'd forgotten to put any. I know that all my books will die, and I wonder if I shall go down to literary history as the person who chose a title for Sylvia Cartwright's poem 'A Night in Rome'? I think perhaps I deserved that much of fame.

As soon as she was well enough I went to see her, but we didn't get on at all. I hadn't the slightest wish for her to be grateful, but I had expected to find her interesting, and she was extremely dull. She did not wish to discuss her poetry, or her life, nor any one else's poetry (as a matter of fact she had read very little), nor their lives. She took a morbid interest in her own symptoms, and complained of the doctor who had saved her life. She did not object, however, to the Blue Nuns; on the contrary, it was quite obvious that she liked them a great deal better than she liked me, and felt freer in her intercourse with them. I could have understood her dislike if she had felt any shame for her behaviour that night, but although she was a little hard and defiant with me, as if she felt she had violated my standard, she betrayed not the faintest indication of having any standard of her own.

Apparently the Blue Nuns had spoken with the utmost plainness to her, and told her exactly what would happen to her physically and mentally if she continued to live as she had been living. She was rather frightened by what they said, but neither angry nor remorseful. She simply said, 'How awful! Because, of course, I can't stop looking for things, can I?'

The second time I saw her at the hospital she was sitting out on a balcony with the view of the Campagna from the Cœlian Hill. The mountains were like blue transparent walls through which the gold air danced. The pink aqueducts wandered out over the long waves of the land, fixing their age-long strength in slender arches. Here and there an umbrella pin rose up, a solitary island in the blue wash of air. The almond blossoms were not yet in flower, but the bare slender stems of the willow, brilliant orange and burnt amber, filled the blank spaces of the Campagna with their tracery.

Sylvia gave me a hostile glance, which I must admit hurt me, like the dislike of a child. 'You bother me,' she said resentfully; 'please don't come and see me any more.'

'Very well,' I said, 'I won't. But before I go, I should like to know very much why I bother you?'

She looked out towards the hills. I remember watching her eyes rest on the delicate blue peak of Monte Cave where the Romans held their second-class triumphs.

'Oh, I don't know!' she exclaimed a little impatiently; 'you're so tidy and kind, and nothing ever comes out of you straight. I know I'm a beast. I can't help it; you make me feel so queer in my heart, as if I were afraid to get like you! You're very strong, aren't you, all tied up inside? — and I'm outside, all of me — every which way! — and it's the way I *want* to be. I'm weak, you know, and I'm awfully afraid of people who could pull me in! I couldn't stay in, of course, but I'd break, I think, if they ever dragged me once inside. It isn't what you've done for me I mind. Though the Sisters keep telling me what I owe you. But you've got the money, haven't you? — and, besides, after all, money is nothing. But, oh, I do want so awfully just to be left alone!'

I told her that as far as I was concerned she should be left alone. My car was waiting at the door, but I sent it away; I wanted suddenly to walk back. But before I went I asked to see the Mother Superior. Mother Superiors often give one the impression of possessing supernatural lore, and the Mother of the Blue Nuns did not on this occasion disappoint me.

'Why does she dislike me so?' I asked. 'Apparently it's not the usual reaction of ingratitude, because she simply doesn't know what she has to be grateful for. She's just informed me that money is of no consequence, though, as you tell me, she was half starved when she came here, I should have thought she must have learned the contrary. I've done my best to be kind to her, and I'm not in the least prejudiced, and yet she seems to prefer all of you — whom I should suppose to be a good deal sterner judges of the moral law than I am. I suppose you know she's persistently broken it, in every direction, for years?'

The Mother Superior waved her hand deprecatingly. 'Yes, yes,' she said, 'the poor child has lived a life of sin. There has been no attempt to conceal it, or our views of it. And you are not only a lady of the great world, and very broad-minded, but you have done what you call "everything" for her — and of course in a sense it is everything.' The Mother Superior paused and smiled at me in a curious, half-puzzled way. 'If I may say so,' she murmured, 'she perhaps prefers us because we are dedicated, and your little poet friend is also dedicated; that makes a point in common. I know it sounds strange, and I am afraid I cannot explain it very well, but about her work she has discipline, she obeys laws, she — she communicates with Something higher than herself. Your business, Lady Marian, is in this world, and I am sure that you do it admirably and that you are an example both to your little friend and to ourselves. But, forgive me, the world you live in is different. You were just now unable to understand how to a half-starved child money could be as nothing. But we understand her — to us also the joys, the privileges of this world are nothing! I admit that to most half-starved children, alas, money *is* everything; but when there is an inner light shining, even the aching needs of the body become like shadows. You have noticed, have you not, how firelight turns pale and vanishes when the sun pours through a window upon it? You will understand then what it is to have the Spirit pour down upon our little spirits, till hunger and cold, evil, and even what we call good, turn pale! Alas, our poor little one has much to learn! She is not a pure spirit; but there is something in her which is of the spirit, and she who is disobedient to all God's laws on earth is nevertheless not disobedient to the heavenly vision. We must hope and pray that she will learn not only to guard the sacred flame, but the temple into which It passes.'

I opened my lips to ask another question, and then shut them again, for I already knew the answer. Both the poet and the saint had rejected me. I was not even that blue clay out of which diamonds shine.

SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE[1]

JOHN BUCHAN

The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it.

R. L. STEVENSON

LEITHEN's face had that sharp chiseling of the jaw and that compression of the lips which seem to follow upon high legal success. Also an overdose of German gas in '18 had given his skin an habitual pallor, so that he looked not unhealthy, but notably urban. As a matter of fact he was one of the hardest men I have ever known, but a chance observer might have guessed from his complexion that he rarely left the pavements.

Burminster, who had come back from a month in the grass countries with a face like a deep-sea mariner's, commented on this one evening.

'How do you manage always to look the complete Cit, Ned?' he asked. 'You're as much a Londoner as a Parisian is a Parisian, if you know what I mean.'

Leithen said that he was not ashamed of it, and he embarked on a eulogy of the metropolis. In London you met sooner or later everybody you had ever known; you

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[1] Copyright, 1928, by John Buchan.

could lay your hand on any knowledge you wanted; you could pull strings that controlled the innermost Sahara and the topmost Pamirs. Romance lay in wait for you at every street corner. It was the true City of the Caliphs.

'That is what they say,' said Sandy Arbuthnot sadly, 'but I never found it so. I yawn my head off in London. Nothing amusing ever finds me out — I have to go and search for it, and it usually costs the deuce of a lot.'

'I once stumbled upon a pretty generous allowance of romance,' said Leithen, 'and it cost me precisely sixpence.'

Then he told us this story.

It happened a good many years ago, just when I was beginning to get on at the Bar. I spent busy days in court and chambers, but I was young and had a young man's appetite for society, so I used to dine out most nights and go to more balls than were good for me. It was pleasant after a heavy day to dive into a different kind of life. My rooms at the time were in Down Street, the same house as my present one, only two floors higher up.

On a certain night in February I was dining in Bryanston Square with the Nantleys. Mollie Nantley was an old friend, and used to fit me as an unattached bachelor into her big dinners. She was a young hostess and full of ambition, and one met an odd assortment of people at her house. Mostly political, of course, but a sprinkling of art and letters, and any visiting lion that happened to be passing through. Mollie was a very innocent lion-hunter, but she had a partiality for the breed.

I don't remember much about the dinner, except that the principal guest had failed her. Mollie was loud in her lamentations. He was a South American President who had engineered a very pretty *coup d'état* the year before, and was now in England on some business concerning the finances of his State. You may remember his name — Ramon Pelem — he made rather a stir in the world for a year or two. I had read about him in the papers, and had looked forward to meeting him, for he had won his way to power by extraordinary boldness and courage, and he was quite young. There was a story that he was partly English and that his grandfather's name had been Pelham. I don't know what truth there was in that, but he knew England well and Englishmen liked him.

Well, he had cried off on the telephone an hour before, and Mollie was grievously disappointed. Her other guests bore the loss with more fortitude, for I expect they thought he was a brand of cigar.

In those days dinners began earlier and dances later than they do to-day. I meant to leave soon, go back to my rooms and read briefs, and then look in at Lady Samplar's dance between eleven and twelve. So at nine-thirty I took my leave.

Jervis, the old butler, who had been my ally from boyhood, was standing on the threshold, and in the square there was a considerable crowd, now thinning away. I asked what the trouble was.

'There's been an arrest, Mr. Edward,' he said in an awestruck voice. 'It 'appened when I was serving coffee in the dining-room, but our Albert saw it all. Two foreigners, he said — proper rascals by their look — were took away by the police just outside this very door. The constables was very nippy and collared them before they could use their pistols — but they 'ad pistols on them and no mistake. Albert says he saw the weapons.'

'Did they propose to burgle you?' I asked.

'I cannot say, Mr. Edward. But I shall give instruction for a very careful lock-up to-night.'

There were no cabs about, so I decided to walk on and pick one up. When I got into Great Cumberland Place, it began to rain sharply, and I was just about to call a prowling hansom, when I put my hand into my pocket. I found that I had no more than one solitary sixpence.

I could, of course, have paid when I got to my flat. But as the rain seemed to be slacking off, I preferred to walk. Mollie's dining-room had been stuffy, I had been in court all day, and I wanted some fresh air.

You know how in little things, when you have decided on a course, you are curiously reluctant to change it. Before I got to the Marble Arch, it had begun to pour in downright earnest. But I still stumped on. Only I entered the Park, for even in February there is a certain amount of cover from the trees.

I passed one or two hurried pedestrians, but the place was almost empty. The occasional lamps made only spots of light in a dripping darkness, and it struck me that this was a curious patch of gloom and loneliness to be so near to crowded streets, for with the rain had come a fine mist. I pitied the poor devils to whom it was the only home. There was one of them on a seat which I passed. The collar of his thin, shabby overcoat was turned up, and his shameful old felt hat was turned down, so that only a few square inches of pale face were visible. His toes stuck out of his boots, and he seemed sunk in a sodden misery.

I passed him and then turned back. Casual charity is an easy dope for the conscience, and I indulge in it too often. When I approached him he seemed to stiffen and his hands moved in his pockets.

'A rotten night,' I said. 'Is sixpence any good to you?' And I held out my solitary coin.

He lifted his face, and I started. For the eyes that looked at me were not those of a waster. They were bright, penetrating, authoritative — and they were young. I was conscious that they took in more of me than mine did of him.

'Thank you very much,' he said, as he took the coin, and the voice was that of a cultivated man. 'But I'm afraid I need rather more than sixpence.'

'How much?' I asked. This was clearly an original.

'To be accurate, five million pounds.'

He was certainly mad, but I was fascinated by this wisp of humanity. I wished that he would show more of his face.

'Till your ship comes home,' I said, 'you want a bed, and you'd be the better of a change. Sixpence is all I have on me. But if you come to my rooms, I'll give you the price of a night's lodging, and I think I might find you some old clothes.'

'Where do you live?' he asked.

'Close by — in Down Street.' I gave the number.

He seemed to reflect, and then he shot a glance on either side into the gloom behind the road. It may have been fancy, but I thought that I saw something stir in the darkness.

'What are you?' he asked.

I was getting abominably wet, and yet I submitted to be cross-examined by this waif.

'I am a lawyer,' I said.

He looked at me again, very intently.

'Have you a telephone?' he asked.

I nodded.

'Right,' he said. 'You seem a good fellow and I'll take you at your word. I'll follow you.... Don't look back, please. It's important.... I'll be in Down Street as soon as you.... *Marchons.*'

It sounds preposterous, but I did exactly as I was bid. I never looked back, but I kept my ears open for the sound of following footsteps. I thought I heard them, and then they seemed to die away. I turned out of the Park at Grosvenor Gate and went down Park Lane. When I reached the house which contained my flat, I looked up and down the street, but it was empty except for a waiting four-wheeler. But just as I turned in, I caught a glimpse of some one running at the Hertford Street end. The runner came to a sudden halt, and I saw that it was not the man I had left.

To my surprise I found the waif on the landing outside my flat. I was about to tell him to stop outside, but as soon as I unlocked the door he brushed past me and entered. My man, who did not sleep on the premises, had left the light burning in the little hall.

'Lock the door,' he said in a tone of authority. 'Forgive me taking charge, but I assure you it is important.'

Then to my amazement he peeled off the sopping overcoat, and kicked off his disreputable shoes. They were odd shoes, for what looked like his toes sticking out was really part of the make-up. He stood up before me in underclothes and socks, and I noticed that his underclothing seemed to be of the finest material.

'Now for your telephone,' he said.

I was getting angry at these liberties.

'Who the devil are you?' I demanded.

'I am President Pelem,' he said, with all the dignity in the world. 'And you?'

'I? — oh, I am the German Emperor.'

He laughed. 'You know you invited me here,' he said. 'You've brought this on yourself.' Then he stared at me. 'Hullo, I've seen you before. You're Leithen. I saw you play at Lords'. I was twelfth man for Harrow that year. ... Now for the telephone.'

There was something about the fellow, something defiant and debonair and young, that stopped all further protest on my part. He might or might not be President Pelem, but he was certainly not a wastrel. Besides, he seemed curiously keyed up, as if the occasion were desperately important, and he infected me with the same feeling. I said no more, but led the way into my sitting-room. He flung himself on the telephone, gave a number, was instantly connected, and began a conversation in monosyllables.

It was a queer jumble that I overheard. Bryanston Square was mentioned, and the Park, and the number of my house was given — to somebody. There was a string of foreign names — Pedro and Alejandro and Manuel and Alcaza — and short breathless inquiries. Then I heard — 'a good fellow — looks as if he might be useful in a row,' and I wondered if he was referring to me. Some rapid Spanish followed, and then, 'Come round at once — they will be here before you. Have policemen below, but don't let them come up. We should be able to manage alone. Oh, and tell Burton to ring up here as soon as he has news.' And he gave my telephone number.

I put some coals on the fire, changed into a tweed jacket, and lit a pipe. I fetched a dressing-gown from my bedroom and flung it on the sofa. 'You'd better put that on,' I said when he had finished.

He shook his head.

'I would rather be unencumbered,' he said. 'But I should dearly love a cigarette... and a liqueur brandy, if you have such a thing. That Park of yours is infernally chilly.'

I supplied his needs, and he stretched himself in an armchair, with his stockinged feet to the fire.

'You have been very good-humoured, Leithen,' he said. 'Valdez — that's my aide-de-camp — will be here presently, and he will probably be preceded by other guests. But I think I have time for the short explanation which is your due. You believed what I told you?'

I nodded.

'Good. Well, I came to London three weeks ago to raise a loan. That was a matter of life or death for my big stupid country. I have succeeded. This afternoon the agreement was signed. I think I mentioned the amount to you — five million sterling.'

He smiled happily and blew a smoke-ring into the air.

'I must tell you that I have enemies. Among my happy people there are many rascals, and I had to deal harshly with them. "So foul a sky clears not without a storm" — that's Shakespeare, isn't it? I learned it at school. You see, I had Holy Church behind me, and therefore I had against me all the gentry who call themselves liberators. Red Masons, anarchists, communists, that sort of crew. A good many are now reposing beneath the sod, but some of the worst remain. In particular, six followed me to England with instructions that I must not return.

'I don't mind telling you, Leithen, that I have had a peculiarly rotten time the last three weeks. It was most important that nothing should happen to me till the loan was settled, so I had to lead the sheltered life. It went against the grain, I assure you, for I prefer the offensive to the defensive. The English police were very amiable, and I never stirred without a cordon, your people and my own. The Six wanted to kill me, and as it is pretty easy to kill anybody if you don't mind being killed yourself, we had to take rather elaborate precautions. As it was, I was twice nearly done in. Once my carriage broke down mysteriously, and a crowd collected, and if I hadn't had the luck to board a passing cab, I should have had a knife in my ribs. The second was at a public dinner — something not quite right about the cayenne pepper served with the oysters. One of my staff is still seriously ill.'

He stretched his arms.

'Well, that first stage is over. They can't wreck the loan, whatever happens to me. Now I am free to adopt different tactics and take the offensive. I have no fear of the Six in my own country. There I can take precautions, and they will find it difficult to cross the frontier or to live for six hours thereafter if they succeed. But here you are a free people, and protection is not so easy. I do not wish to leave England just yet — I have done my work and have earned a little play. I know your land and love it, and I look forward to seeing something of my friends. Also I want to attend the Grand National. Therefore, it is necessary that my enemies should be confined for a little, while I take my holiday. So for this evening I made a plan. I took the offensive. I deliberately put myself in their danger.'

He turned his dancing eyes towards me, and I have rarely had such an impression of wild and mirthful audacity.

'We have an excellent intelligence system,' he went on, 'and the Six have been assiduously shadowed. But as I have told you, no precautions avail against the fanatic, and I do not wish to be killed on my little holiday. So I resolved to draw their fire — to expose myself as ground bait, so to speak, that I might have the chance of netting them. The Six usually hunt in couples, so it was necessary to have three separate acts in the play, if all were to be gathered in. The first ——'

'Was in Bryanston Square,' I put in, 'outside Lady Nantley's house?'

'True. How did you know?'

'I have just been dining there, and heard that you were expected. I saw the crowd in the square as I came away.'

'It seems to have gone off quite nicely. We took pains to let it be known where I was dining. The Six, who mistrust me, delegated only two of their number for the job. They never put all their eggs in one basket. The two gentlemen were induced to make a scene, and, since they proved to be heavily armed, were taken into custody and may get a six months' sentence. Very prettily managed, but unfortunately, it was the two that matter least — the ones we call Little Pedro and Alejandro the Scholar. Impatient, blundering children, both of them. That leaves four.'

The telephone bell rang, and he made a long arm for the receiver. The news he got seemed to be good, for he turned a smiling face to me.

'I should have said two. My little enterprise in the Park has proved a brilliant success.... But I must explain. I was to be the bait for my enemies, so I showed myself to the remaining four. That was really rather a clever piece of business. They lost me at the Marble Arch and they did not recognise me as the scarecrow sitting on the seat in the rain. But they knew I had gone to earth there, and they stuck to the scent like terriers. Presently they would have found me, and there would have been shooting. Some of my own people were in the shadow between the road and the railings.'

'When I saw you, were your enemies near?' I asked.

'Two were on the opposite side of the road. One was standing under the lamp-post at the gate. I don't know where the fourth was at that moment. But all had passed me more than once.... By the way, you very nearly got yourself shot, you know. When you asked me if sixpence was any good to me.... That happens to be their password. I take great credit to myself for seeing instantly that you were harmless.'

'Why did you leave the Park if you had your trap so well laid?' I asked.

'Because it meant dealing with all four together at once, and I do them the honour of being rather nervous about them. They are very quick with their guns. I wanted a chance to break up the covey, and your arrival gave it me. When I went off, two followed, as I thought they would. My car was in Park Lane, and gave me a lift; and one of them saw me in it. I puzzled them a little, but by now they must be certain. You see, my car has been waiting for some minutes outside this house.'

'What about the other two?' I asked.

'Burton has just telephoned that they have been gathered in. Quite an exciting little scrap. To your police it must have seemed a bad case of highway robbery — two ruffianly looking fellows hold up a peaceful elderly gentleman returning from dinner. The odds were not quite like that, but the men I had on the job are old soldiers of the Indian wars and can move softly.... I only wish I knew which two they have got. Burton was not sure. Alcaza is one, but I can't be certain about the other. I hope it is not the Irishman.'

My bell rang very loud and steadily.

'In a few seconds I shall have solved that problem,' he said gaily. 'I am afraid I must trouble you to open the door, Leithen.'

'Is it your aide-de-camp?'

'No. I instructed Valdez to knock. It is the residuum of the Six. Now, listen to me, my friend. These two, whoever they are, have come here to kill me, and I don't mean to be killed.... My first plan was to have Valdez here — and others — so that my two enemies should walk into a trap. But I changed my mind before I telephoned. They are very clever men and by this time they will be very wary. So I have thought of something else.'

The bell rang again and a third time insistently.

'Take these,' and he held out a pair of cruel little bluish revolvers. 'When you open the door, you will say that the President is at home and, in token of his confidence, offers them these. '*Une espèce d'Irlandais, Messieurs. Vous commencez trop tard, et vous finissez trop tôt.*' Then bring them here. Quick, now. I hope Corbally is one of them.'

I did exactly as I was told. I cannot say that I had any liking for the task, but I was a good deal under the spell of that calm young man, and I was resigned to my flat being made a rendezvous for desperadoes. I had locked and chained and bolted the door, so it took me a few moments to open it.

I found myself looking at emptiness.

'Who is it?' I called. 'Who rang?'

I was answered from behind me. It was the quickest thing I have ever seen, for they must have slipped through in the moment when my eyes were dazzled by the change from the dim light of the hall to the glare of the landing. That gave me some notion of the men we had to deal with.

'Here,' said the voice. I turned and saw two men in waterproofs and felt hats, who kept their hands in their pockets and had a fraction of an eye on the two pistols I swung by the muzzles.

'M. le Président will be glad to see you, gentlemen,' I said. I held out the revolvers, which they seemed to grasp and flick into their pockets with a single movement. Then I repeated slowly the piece of rudeness in French.

One of the men laughed. 'Ramon does not forget,' he said. He was a young man with sandy hair and hot blue eyes and an odd break in his long drooping nose. The other was a wiry little fellow, with a grizzled beard and what looked like a stiff leg.

I had no guess at my friend's plan, and was concerned to do precisely as I was told. I opened the door of my sitting-room, and noticed that the President was stretched on my sofa facing the door. He was smoking and was still in his underclothes. When the two men behind me saw that he was patently unarmed, they slipped into the room with a quick catlike movement and took their stand with their backs against the door.

'Hullo, Corbally,' said the President pleasantly. 'And you, Manuel. You're looking younger than when I saw you last. Have a cigarette?' and he nodded towards my box on the table behind him. Both shook their heads.

'I'm glad you have come. You have probably seen the news of the loan in the evening papers. That should give you a holiday, as it gives me one. No further need for the hectic oversight of each other, which is so wearing and takes up so much time.'

'No,' said the man called Manuel, and there was something very grim about his quiet tones. 'We shall take steps to prevent any need for that in the future.'

'Tut, tut — that is your old self, Manuel. You are too fond of melodrama to be an artist. You are a priest at heart.'

The man snarled. 'There will be no priest at your death-bed.' Then to his companion, 'Let us get this farce over.'

The President paid not the slightest attention, but looked steadily at the Irishman. 'You used to be a sportsman, Mike. Have you come to share Manuel's taste for potting the sitting rabbit?'

'We are not sportsmen; we are executioners of justice,' said Manuel.

The President laughed merrily. 'Superb! The best Roman manner.' He still kept his eyes on Corbally.

'Damn you, what's your game, Ramon?' the Irishman asked. His freckled face had become very red.

'Simply to propose a short armistice. I want a holiday. If you must know, I want to go to the National.'

'So do I.'

'Well, let's call a truce. Say for two months or till I leave England — whichever period shall be the shorter. After that you can get busy again.'

The one he had named Manuel broke into a spluttering torrent of Spanish, and for a little they all talked that language. It sounded like a commination service on the President, to which he good-humouredly replied. I had never seen this class of ruffian before, to whom murder was as simple as shooting a partridge, and I noted curiously the lean hands, the restless, wary eyes, and the ugly lips of the type. So far as I could make out, the President seemed to be getting on well with the Irishman, but to be having trouble with Manuel.

'Have ye really and truly nothing on ye?' Corbally asked.

The President stretched his arms and revealed his slim figure in its close-fitting pants and vest.

'Nor him there?' and he nodded towards me.

'He is a lawyer; he doesn't use guns.'

'Then I'm damned if I touch ye. Two months it is. What's your fancy for Liverpool?'

This was too much for Manuel. I saw in what seemed to be one movement his hand slip from his pocket, Corbally's arm swing in a circle, and a plaster bust of Julius Cæsar tumble off the top of my bookcase. Then I heard the report.

'Ye nasty little man,' said Corbally as he pressed him to his bosom in a bear's hug.

'You are a traitor!' Manuel shouted. 'How will we face the others? What will Alejandro say and Alcaza ——?'

'I think I can explain,' said the President pleasantly. 'They won't know for quite a time, and then only if you tell them. You two gentlemen are all that remain for the moment of your patriotic company. The other four have been the victims of the English police — two in Bryanston Square, and two in the Park close to the Marble Arch.'

'Ye don't say!' said Corbally, with admiration in his voice. 'Faith, that's smart work!'

'They, too, will have a little holiday. A few months to meditate on politics, while you and I go to the Grand National.'

Suddenly there was a sharp rat-tat at my door. It was like the knocking in 'Macbeth' for dramatic effect. Corbally had one pistol at my ear in an instant, while a second covered the President.

'It's all right,' said the latter, never moving a muscle. 'It's General Valdez, whom I think you know. That was another argument which I was coming to if I hadn't had the good fortune to appeal to Mr. Corbally's higher nature. I know you have sworn to kill me, but I take it that the killer wants to have a sporting chance of escape. Well, there wouldn't have been the faintest shadow of a chance here. Valdez is at the door, and the English police are below. You are brave men, I know, but even brave men dislike the cold gallows.'

The knocker fell again. 'Let him in, Leithen,' I was told, 'or he will be damaging your valuable door. He has not the Northern phlegm of you and me and Mr. Corbally.'

A tall man in an ulster, which looked as if it covered a uniform, stood on the threshold. Some one had obscured the lights on the landing so that the staircase was dark, but I could see in the gloom other figures. 'President Pelem,' he began...

'The President is here,' I said. 'Quite well and in great form. He is entertaining two other guests.'

The General marched to my sitting-room. I was behind him and did not see his face, but I can believe that it showed surprise when he recognised the guests. Manuel stood sulkily defiant, his hands in his waterproof pockets, but Corbally's light eyes were laughing.

'I think you know each other,' said the President graciously.

'My God!' Valdez seemed to choke at the sight. 'These swine! ... Excellency, I have ——'

'You have nothing of the kind. These are friends of mine for the next two months, and Mr. Corbally and I are going to the Grand National together. Will you have the goodness to conduct them downstairs and explain to the inspector of police below that all has gone well and that I am perfectly satisfied, and that he will hear from me in the morning ... One moment. What about a stirrup cup? Leithen, does your establishment run to a whiskey-and-soda all round?'

It did. We all had a drink, and I believe I clinked glasses with Manuel.

. . . .

I looked in at Lady Samplar's dance as I had meant to. Presently I saw a resplendent figure arrive — the President, with the ribbon of the Gold Star of Bolivar across his chest. He was no more the larky undergraduate, but the responsible statesman, the father of his country. There was a considerable crowd in his vicinity when I got near him and he was making his apologies to Mollie Nantley. She saw me and insisted on introducing me. 'I so much wanted you two to meet. I had hoped it would be at my dinner—but anyhow I have managed it.' I think she was a little surprised when the President took my hand in both of his. 'I saw Mr. Leithen play at Lords' in '97,' he said. 'I was twelfth man for Harrow that year. It is delightful to make his acquaintance, I shall never forget this meeting.'

'How English he is!' Mollie whispered to me as we made our way out of the crowd.

They got him next year. They were bound to, for in that kind of business you can have no real protection. But he managed to set his country on its feet before he went down.... No, it was neither Manuel nor Corbally. I think it was Alejandro the Scholar.

HERSELF[1]

KATHARINE NEWLIN BURT

NOT to let Mother know...not to let Mother know!

Mother's face had a sort of radiance. That was what the little girl feared: fear ran all along her spine and traveled through her blood in separate chilly vessels when she thought of that radiance in Mother's face as it turned toward her. She could see it watching from the window, always shining there, ready to dazzle into a smile, ready to light her little journeyings from this side of the garden to that. She wanted to escape from it, to avoid it. Sometimes she put her arm across her face. Then Mother laughed: 'What you hiding from, Poppet?' The little girl would call out, 'F'om you, mom,' and that was the truth. But it was not a playful truth, it was a serious one. Mother's radiance was terrible.

When she was released from it — for sometimes a caller would come and sometimes a servant for consultation and sometimes Mother would lie down for a little rest — she ran about like a lamed bird, fluttered, sang low, sang shrill, and ended always back of the peony hedge where the sunflowers grew against the wall. Under the brick wall a ditch had been dug, a dry ditch now, though once

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[1] Copyright, 1930, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

it had drained off the garden. It went under an arch. Through this came in that other girl, to whom she had given a quaint name, *Herself.*

Herself, dirty, tangled, rowdy-haired, hoarse-whispering, Herself, who was not afraid, Herself, who knew everything that little girls were not supposed to know. Herself, who liked dirt, the filthier the better, who liked to pull off the butterfly's wings, and who didn't care. She didn't care. She didn't care. Like a worm in the earth, she wriggled about, not caring. She would laugh at God. She would mock Him. She knew things about boys, knew the ugly way that babies come, too ugly and too interesting for Mother to tell. Mother had a pretty story about a stork and angels, pretty clean white fat babies lying asleep on water-lily pads. Pretty. Everything Mother told her was pretty. Heaven. Guardian angels. Even God . . . a big kind man with wings. Sleep was kind. The Dark was a beautiful angel who wrapped you in a loving cloak. That other girl knew better. Sleep was . . . Dreams. Naughty dreams. You had your own way. You didn't care. The Dark was full of all the Things you had been told not to see. Devils were in the dark. Ghosts. Bloody murderers and whispering thieves. That made life fun. If you didn't care. That other girl said that God was not a kind old man. He forgave you only because Jesus Christ had let men put nails into his hands and feet. That was the price of forgiveness.

If it hadn't been for that, He would have sent you into an everlasting fire to roast. And Jesus did it because he had been sent to do it. God liked suffering but Jesus didn't want to die. He cried and prayed. But God forced him to let himself be killed. He might have gone away. But God told him to stay and be scourged and killed. So you were washed in his Blood. Did you like to be washed in blood? That was not pretty. But it was exciting. The girl scratched her leg with a big thorn and showed you blood. She smeared it all over. You got it on your face. Blood.

That strange child wanted to come into the house. She was not afraid of Mother. Mother was a liar. Mother was scared. Mother had to pretend that things were pretty. Herself was not scared. Let her come into the house just once. She wanted to make it dirty, please! She wanted to stick out her tongue at Mother. Wanted to say Something Bad. To see how Mother looked. Perhaps Mother would punish her. To be whipped, that was exciting.

In the midst of one of these hidden interviews, Mother would call, 'Where are you, precious?' That was the signal to run to meet Mother and kiss her and hug her as though she would never be done...close, close, so that Mother might not see the little smear of blood upon her face.

One day that other child followed close and quietly and came into the house. Mother had a long talk with her, took her away into the South Parlor. They were shut in a long time. The child was terrible. Mother whipped her. That made Mother cry, but the child only pretended to cry. She yelled because she was excited and wanted all the house to hear and to admire her. After the whipping she stayed always in the house. Mother was sad, her radiance faded a little but that girl stayed. There were no explanations.

All this drew Mother and her little daughter very close and made them very dear to each other. They did not talk much about the other child. They tried to forget.

But all the while, instead of forgetting, the loving daughter wondered why she had let a stranger come into the house? Why had she ever let it be seen by Mother? That was the terrible mistake. That was what made life hard. Before that, she had enjoyed knowing the queer, bad girl. It had been a horrid, fascinating sort of secret, an adventure. Now it wasn't that. It was unhappiness and shame. She knew that she should have driven that one away... out there by the old ditch. She should never have listened to her wild bad talk. She should not have allowed her to follow into the house.

She wept, 'Mother, darling, why don't you get rid of that girl?'

Mother stroked the long sleek golden hair.

'I can't do that, my precious, unless you will help me.'

'I'll help you. Mother. Let's try.'

They tried. They were cruel. They starved her, they left her out long bitter nights in the frosty garden. They hoped that she might run away. All night long the little girl indoors could not sleep, listening to the whimpering thing. She would get up and let her in and the cold stranger would creep into her bed, close under the covers, getting warm.

Mother said, 'You are not in earnest about driving away that child. You love her.'

'Don't you, Mother?'

Mother shivered. 'She is like a child I knew once... that's why.'

The time came for a good little girl to be sent away to boarding-school to learn how to grow up politely, as all the other good little girls were learning. That was a lovely school filled with the nicest sort of little girls. At boarding-school the daughter was happier than she had ever been except when the longing came upon her for the ease and warmth of home. At such times she wanted Mother and she wanted her old familiar friend and enemy. She was haunted by the hoarse, whispering voice, the thick arms and the queer deep-earthy smell. There was a freedom in being with that queer and secret companion not to be found with any one else in the whole world... *She* was never afraid. The nice girls were afraid, so were the teachers; they were all pretending that the world was pretty, that children, especially young girls, were very pretty and that womanhood was the prettiest thing of all.

In the middle of the winter, her roommate fell sick and had to be taken to the infirmary. She missed her dreadfully. There was no one to whisper to after the lights went out. One night, she noticed in her room an earthy smell. She sat up in bed and whispered. Yes, the strange old companion had come. She crept into bed and they went to sleep after a long while in each other's arms.

That newcomer was a terrible danger and an agonizing secret. She kept her hidden away out of sight of teachers and girls. But after a long while she let her best school-friend into the secret. Next, the best friend told a chum. Soon there were about a dozen girls who knew. They would come to her room for secret meetings when, all in the dark, that girl would entertain them. It was exciting. She had the girls quivering, tittering, blushing, thrilled, ashamed. They called these secret meetings 'Ghastly Evenings.' The hoarse whisper would tell about the Bloody Murderers and the Grim Gray Ghosts, would describe dreadful tortures of beautiful young men in dungeons miles down under the earth, where rats scuttled and long-legged insects lived. One of the very little girls began to have nightmares. That amused all the others because they had awful dreams too, but being almost as brave as the inventor of the horrible stories, they did not cry out or wake the teachers.

Dolly's nightmares grew worse and worse and at last the little girl had hysterics in the daytime and was sent home. Later came a letter from Dolly's mamma.

The head teacher called for a certain pupil.

'You are one of our nicest girls,' she said, 'and I can find no fault with you at all. But Dolly has told her mother that there is a girl at school who has been talking to some of you about dreadful things. Dolly says that... *you* will know. Now, I have no complaint to make of you. Your deportment has been excellent, so has your scholastic record. The nicest pupils seem to like you, to choose you for a friend. But I must get to the bottom of this. Please tell me, if you can, what Dolly means.'

She cried and cried. She didn't say a word about that hidden comrade of hers. She just cried and cried. The teacher was grave and kind. She sent the sobbing girl to her room to think it all over and to pray. There, instead of praying, she wrote to Mother and asked to be taken away.

She gave no reason. She just wrote a letter blistered with tears and begged and prayed Mother to take her home... before it was too late.

The head teacher said, 'I am glad that your mother is taking you away, for I feel that in some mysterious fashion, you have been a bad influence in the school. And yet I can find no fault with you. You are so pretty and so gentle and so good.' And she cried and kissed the young girl, stroking her long sleek golden hair.

'Coming out' was the most exciting thing that had ever happened. It meant lovely dresses, dancing, theaters, flowers, competitive girl-friends and young men. She forgot all about that other girl. She was too gay, too busy, and too tired to listen to hoarse whisperings. All the ugly facts were forgotten. There was so much music, such splendid intimate dancing. The young men's bodies were clean and strong, they made her feel clean and strong and quick with bright warm blood. And the music set to its deep pulse-rhythms all that she had really enjoyed of that companion's courage and release from care. It was blessed freedom to be frank and brave, to feel that if life could not be pretty it could be splendid, eager, noisy, real. Physical weariness was better than anything she had yet tasted, it freed her from other preoccupations. Weariness that came from loud laughter, from meaningless shouting, from interminable throbbing of drums and feet, freed her mysteriously from shame, uncleanness, and from fear.

And yet, Mother had never seemed so far away. Mother did not understand the splendid fierce release. She had understood the other trouble, had liked whipping that child and starving her and locking her up. She had liked the shedding of sorrowful, anxious tears on her own little daughter's bright soft hair. But by the dancing and the music and the loud staccato talk Mother was frightened. Something might happen to her child.

When she cut off that lovely shining hair, Mother sobbed, 'My baby is gone: my sweet baby is dead'; but the young girl stretched up her long white arms and stretched out her long slim body, hard and supple from laughter and dancing and speeding about by day and night, and felt that the long hair had been a weight and a curtain and that for lack of it her neck was clean and her head proud. That other One was gone, lost...dead. She laughed to think of her. But Mother missed that Trouble...it had been exciting, terrible, a cause for darling tears.

There was a boy with gray eyes whom she loved. He was an absurd and laugh-provoking boy, a young golliwog with a weird, loose-hung, beautiful body and a beautiful voice and with a gift for the mimicry of every solemn and portentous grimace in the world. He loved her body and he told her so.

'It fits,' he said, 'but I haven't the money to buy it from you. Have you any money?'

She had no money. Mother told her she could have none for years and years and years. She must marry a man who was able to stand on his own feet and to make his way in the world. The boy's father, who did have money, said, 'Boy must begin at the bottom of the ladder just as I did. He can't afford to marry for years and years.'

The boy kissed her, when she cried. She loved him and he loved her. They told the world. Her mother said, 'Wait.' The boy's father said, 'Wait.'

They waited and they danced and their passion presently turned to quarrelling and tears and hate. They knew what would cure his nervous quarrelling, but they were afraid.

It was then that the other girl came back.

Rather than let the boy meet with this creature, she told him never to see her again. He said, 'Right,' and walked away from her. He went all the way down the hall to the front door. She stood between the curtains of the drawing-room. His moving feet pulled tight cords on her heart.

'You are a damn fool,' said that other girl, roughly, loudly.

To hide the slattern with her bold eyes, her rough hair, and her thick red mouth, the sleek and golden daughter of the house drew the two curtains all about her.

But the boy whirled like a top.

'By God! You've said it! That's the girl I want.'

He came back and tore her from the curtains. There she stood, that other girl, laughing like a fish-wife.

But the shamed child who loved him ran away and hid. And she would never see the gray-eyed boy again. He did not want to come back after that night. He had been frightened and disgusted. He had liked more than anything else the cleanness that was hers. It was the cleanness and the strength of her beautiful body that had made it 'fit.'

Then the right man came along.

She knew at once that he was the right man because he matched with all the Pretty Things, with guardian angels and the Big Kind Man with Wings. Mother was so pleased with him. He was thirty-seven years old — seventeen years older than she was — and when she was with him it was like being with the memory of her father, tender and kind, stolen from that first right in him which Mother had had, and this made her heart beat with a secret triumph. And he was handsome in a close-knit, level way, strong without any of the boy's weird suppleness. Oh, how hard she tried to please this older man! She had never taken so much trouble. She would watch his face for every brightness of approval, for every shadow of distaste. She studied to be the Ideal Woman. She drew him out on the subject of the Ideal Woman. He was very strong in his disapproval of the modern girl. She tried not to be a modern girl. She tried to wear the dresses he approved, the colors he preferred. She would not smoke cigarettes, nor drink cocktails. She danced a foot away from every partner. She would not flirt, nor 'pet,' nor stay out late.

Mother and she drew very close together again. The girl that this man loved and Mother's precious girl were so alike. It was a going back to the old days when Mother and she had had so many good crying times together, when they had tried to drive the other girl away. This older man even wanted her to grow the sleek bright hair. 'You are really an old-fashioned little girl. You have an old-fashioned little face,' he said, 'a sweet, old-fashioned, rosebud girl, that's what you are and how I love you for it!'

When this older man kissed her, she felt small and shy and flattered. She didn't want to kiss back. She wanted to be kissed and petted tenderly.

This man had two fortunes, one that he had inherited from his grandfather and one that he had made himself in the tea and coffee business. So nobody said, 'Wait.' They were soon engaged to be married and she wore a great blue sapphire. The ring seemed as heavy as an iron belt. Asleep she dreamed that it was welded about her hips and woke up screaming. But she was proud of the big heavy ring on her thin brown finger.

The other girl said, creeping in under the covers, 'When you marry this man, I'm coming to live with you.'

She began to be terribly unhappy. Would her fiancé be willing to marry her if he knew that another woman must come to live with them? Night after night the poor girl lay awake trying to persuade the companion of whom she was ashamed to let her go alone and free into the new life. But that one, unashamed, just held her tightly with her thick hard arms and laughed.

The next afternoon, sitting beside her lover on the drawing-room sofa, she told him all about her foster sister, all that she could remember from the first remembered meeting.

And this wise, brave man drew the trembling confessor into his arms — thick and strong they felt, like another pair — and kissed her shining head.

'As if I couldn't take care of the two of you! We'll tame that naughty girl. I'm strong enough to keep her in her place. She shall come and live with me in my house and if she doesn't learn to be a little lady, I'll beat the life out of her, eh? Shall I?'

'Oh, how I wish you would!' But, in her heart she knew that the 'naughty girl' was very strong, stronger than this man, much too strong for him.

When she came to live with them after they were married the other girl filled the master of the house with loathing. But his eyes glistened as he watched her.

'This is not a nice woman,' he would say. 'This is not an old-fashioned rosebud girl at all. But neither is she the Modern Girl. I don't know where she came from. She reminds me of things I have read. I think there is something about her in the Bible. A strange woman...a strange woman. How coarse she is! She makes me shudder. I am ill for looking at her.' But all the while, his eyes glistened as he talked of her.

He tried to change and to subdue her. This, indeed, became the great preoccupation of his life. And it increased her sense of importance. She pretended to begin to reform, pretended to be more like the sweet girl that this man loved. She stole the bridal clothes and changed them daringly, used powder and paint and perfume above her uncleanliness and stuck false, gilded flowers in her wild hair.

Now, the young wife began to hate this companion with bitterness and fear. Because, while he was trying to reform her, the man she had married was not the man she loved. He lost his tenderness, his gentle, reverent ways. She could not love the grim, fierce tyrant with glittering eyes who thought that he was more than a match for any woman.

Sometimes, it is true, he would admit uneasiness. 'This woman is very strong,' he would say, 'but,' pulling all his muscles tight in the hands of his masculine will, 'we will get the best of her, my poor sweet love.'

At such moments, of doubt and of dependence, his wife loved him again with a deep, new love, warmer and more embracing than any emotion she had ever felt in all her life. Under its influence he would really ignore the other woman. But, after she had cried for nights and days, neglected and alone, the husband would give heed to her again. He would be sure of his strength. He would begin to laugh at his own humility. After such discipline the woman would be very cunning. She had wiles and ways. And the husband, though he dared not admit it, was wild with a queer, fevered delight, to be again in conflict.

So, pretending to be the slave of this man, pretending that soon, very soon he would be altogether master, the woman began more openly to exercise her power. She actually began to appear before some of their friends, entertained them, scared and obsessed them with her terrible unmasculine, unfeminine freedom from care and fear. Just as she had got around Mother and the nice girls at school, so now she began to get around their friends. 'I-don't-care...don't-care...don't-care...' Like a worm in the earth she wriggled about their drawing-room, not caring. Laughing at laws and fears; at pretty stories and at God. At first she would laugh up her sleeve, but later, when every one was used to her boldness, she began to laugh more openly. Then the friends grew bolder too. They always said that they came to the house to see its gentle mistress, but their mood was like her husband's or her own at school. The women admired that creature for her courage and the men were obsessed by their desire to overcome her. They wanted to get the best of her, to be her master. And this they could not do because they were afraid. The woman was so much stronger than they were. She captured them because they were excited by her 'don't care . . . don't care,' which beat with the rhythm of a drum in all her words, her movements and her pulses.

Now, when the thick strong arms of her old companion were flung about her neck, the poor girl would weep helplessly and tremble. That deep-earthy smell was like the odor of a grave.

She had a child. At the first cry of that weak life, the outsider fled away, stopping up her ears as though, at last, she were afraid.

Such happiness came into the clean free house. The father was radiant. He looked like a young knight. He was proud and sweet. He was gay and tender. He would kneel beside her bed and play with his daughter's tiny, dampish fingers.

They felt that their happiness was safe forever.

Gradually they grew accustomed to their fatherhood and motherhood and the baby ceased to be a miracle. But its care became more and more absorbing of attention. Day and night, the mother could think only of her baby: its health and cleanliness, its charming sleep and its entrancing wakefulness. She talked to her husband of nothing else. The rest of her life was just a vague sort of interruption, something that kept her away from Baby, a troublesome fog through which she felt her path back as soon as might be to her child.

It did not occur to her that her husband could not share this profound preoccupation, that he might feel neglected and alone. He was still very tender and kind. But he began to be restless, active, gay. He wanted to go out, to play with his old friends, to make new friends. He wanted 'parties,' to go to them, to give them. She was dreadfully bothered and bored. She was far too much interested in the baby to care for other people, far too tired and too tied-down by hours of feeding, waking, sleeping, to want to go to parties. So, after a fretful while, during which he coaxed and grumbled, he began to go about alone.

For a time the young wife was relieved, then she began to be alarmed. He was so rarely at home and when he was there he was preoccupied, gently indulgent to her and to the baby but always humming or whistling dance-tunes, song-tunes, under his breath.

'This is the way husbands are lost,' she said to her own mind, 'but what am I to do? Baby is so important and so exciting. I wish there were two of me, one to care happily for Baby and one to entertain and interest my husband, make him want to come home and to stay home, make him afraid to run away.' And, for the first time in more than a year, she thought of some one else . . . some one who had gone away in dread of motherhood.

She was alone in the house that night and Baby was asleep. From some other house a short distance away, there came the sound of jungle music, monotonous as heart-beats. It was a sultry, heavy night. Once in a while, a gusty, tired wind leaped up and fell again... earth-bound.

She opened her door and stepped out into the soft thickness of the garden. There was not a star. The night was even, black and dense against her face. It might have been a vast piece of rich cloth; it might have been the black, thick breast of a colored mammy. She felt that she could have pushed it away with her hands. The music sounded louder, nearer, but, except when the wind bounded up wearily and dropped, there was no other sound at all.

She moved a few steps forward through the dark, which seemed to move too with her to give her space and breath. She waited, trying to think. It would be easier to call back this old familiar than to neglect the baby and to run about to parties and to give parties with her husband...easier, less fatiguing, less of a strain. She could stay at home and her husband would stay at home too. She knew that he would be excited by the return of his rebel and his temptress. He wanted her back — secretly, perhaps. Maybe it was in search of her that he ran about from one party to another.

She raised her voice as the wind lifted itself languidly and the trees sighed just once.

She called the name fearfully, for it was a fearful name.

No one answered. No one came. She felt suddenly very lonely and very much afraid. She ran back into the house and locked the glass door.

She turned on all the lights and sat down to play on the piano. She could not drown that other music, playing louder as though the orchestra had come out upon the terrace.

There came the sound of a slow footstep out there in the throbbing dark.

Up she jumped, her heart shaking, unlocked the door and let the wind flow past her, warm and wild and deep-earthy, into the empty room.

The master of that house was not glad to see the woman who returned. He was angry and alarmed. Besides, she had changed. She was dull and sullen. A certain bitter quality had entered into her carelessness so that she was less unself-conscious, less alive. But she had all her terrible freedom from fear, her don't-care, don't-care. It was less wild, to be sure, less childish and more dangerous. She was less unclean, not quite so deep-earthy. She had the dull, dazed look of some one who has slept the clock around in a dark place and is not yet awake.

Nevertheless, though he resented her return and gave her a sour contemptuous greeting, it was easy to see that he was interested, even flattered. He did not guess that she had been deliberately called back for his detention.

He fancied that the strange bold creature had returned of her own accord because of the lure of his masterfulness, his power over her dreadful strength.

Now, for a while he *was* her master. He could do with her just what he wanted. He could humiliate her at will. She dressed as he commanded, danced and sang, played or was silent at his wish.

And, though the mother loathed what she saw and could not love the man in his rôle of master, she was pleased with the success of her plan. For her husband soon lost interest in parties and stayed in his own home, to finish forever with the taming of that woman who had come back.

Little by little, she showed her old vigor. Little by little, she asserted her freedom from love and fear. She mocked her master's God and wriggling about his hearth like a snake she flickered her tongue across the faces of his household idols.

He began to realize that she was not tamed after all, this mocking helot, and he was very angry, very cruel. And more and more enslaved.

She was now the gay and restless one. She insisted upon seeing and entertaining friends. The man had begun to bore her. The house was filled with feverish noise and laughter. It seemed as though its master were afraid to do anything to displease the woman.

His wife stopped her ears. She tried to ignore and to forget. But the tumult, with the contempt and secret anger that it caused her, made her unable to sleep or to care properly for the child. So the child fell sick.

She nursed it day and night and then, the baby being better, she was terribly, terribly tired.

In all her life she had never been so tired. It was like a loosening of the bonds of life. There was no courage in her and no looking forward. It was a longing to be done with the effort that is called life.

Even the baby had ceased to interest her. She was tired of the baby because, more than anything else, it was her life.

The other woman was giving a party. The guests were about to arrive. In one of those borrowed dresses, cut low in the back so that she could struggle into it, she moved about the upstairs rooms singing, hoarse and deep, below her breath. Her massive hips looked as though they would burst through the satin dress below the dreadful suppleness of her long waist. The upper part of her body swayed like the stalk of a tall swamp flower, but below, her body was a root. She seemed to pull it up with an effort when she moved: lightly swaying above, plunging and swinging heavily below, this body in motion had the rhythm of quick notes and of slow — two contrary rhythms yoked together, fascinating, bewildering to watch. One listened to her as she moved.

The mother dropped near her sleeping baby's crib, so heavy were her eyes that the baby's face was in a mist. It would be impossible to keep awake and give the little one her midnight medicine. The other woman must do it, must come up from the party...must remember...ten drops in water, ten drops in water...She must not forget.

So that weary mother went as far away from life as possible and fell down there and shut out the sound of throbbing music, of loud laughter and of gritting, pounding feet, the sound of Baby's fretting and wailing, the sound of life. It was not sleep that came to her that night. It was a long swoon, a complete oblivion.

And the music lasted, beat on, the feet shook the house, made its floors vibrate and its walls tremble, as though it had come to life, had pulses, veins or climbing sap, as though it were growing in a jungle and moved to the passing by of beast pads in a tropic night.

The woman drank to encourage her guests, to free the man and his friends from fear. To-night no one must be afraid. Every one must laugh as she laughed, must shout and mock. They must forget God and Death and Pretty Things. Life must be what she knew it was: a dirty, splendid, careless, aimless, deathless worm, something that was untroubled by the distance between the stars.

Above the perfume of flowers, the aroma of wine, the pungency of smoke, the house was filled with the deep-earthy odor of her courage.

At midnight this woman came into the nursery. She flapped to and fro like a bat in the nursery. When she took the little medicine bottle, she lifted it as though it had been a flagon filled with molten lead. And she poured out the medicine into a glass, counting, 'one-two-three,' but not dropping, pouring all the while. She forced the pungent dose down the baby's throat. It choked at first, then began to moan.

Back the woman went again to her party. She flapped and bounded down the wide, polished stairs, singing her song.

The party lasted until broad day. Sun came in at the eastern windows. The servants were scared by what they saw.

It was the cessation of all noise that woke the baby's mother. She felt very clear in the head and dry and light. Her first thought was for her little girl and she sped back to the nursery along the halls and down the stairs.

The baby lay in its crib with the sun in its face. It was quite blue and very cold.

She screamed aloud, ran to the bottle and saw what had been done. She caught up the baby. It was not dead. Its tiny heart moved weakly at long intervals and its breath fluttered, paused, fluttered again just like an insect that will die.

Holding the fragile thing to her breast, she flew down the stairs, calling for her husband. Through the torn and distracted rooms she went, calling, seeking. Everywhere lay shattered glass, scattered flowers, broken food, and spilled wine. A guest lay asleep, half on a sofa, half on the floor. Delicate chairs had been overturned. A tall clock had been pulled out into the middle of the room and some woman had tied her girdle about it and stuck a man's hat over its bland face. It was still talking its solemn nonsense: TICK-TACK. It was a Grandfather's Clock.

The baby's father, asleep among some cushions on a couch, woke to the sound of her keening, to her icy grasp.

Slowly he understood: the baby was dying, dying. It had been given an overdose of the doctor's powerful drug. Send for that doctor quickly, quickly, she cried, using all the names she had for their old tenderness, calling him her lover, her husband, Baby's father! Send for that doctor, please.

They rang and rang at the telephone and at last the doctor came.

The father, bluish-white, dishevelled in his dress-clothes, the mother, waxen pale in her blue wrapper and her hanging, golden hair, waited upon his verdict.

'She may live. She may. There's a specialist...'

'For God's love, where is the specialist?'

The specialist was not very close at hand, but the father set out at once to get him. He would go by airplane and by airplane they would come back, the specialist and he. They would be back before sunset.

'You won't be in time, I fear,' the doctor whispered to him. 'But it is better to travel than to wait, it is better to try than to give up. That is why I told you about this man. I'll stay with your poor wife and do what can be done. The man has a new way.'

The servants set the house in order. They whispered about these people and their friends all day as they set the house in order and ran about getting little things for the doctor and for their mistress.

The baby lived, the baby still lived. The doctor would not let her die. He sat there beside the crib, not letting her die, pushing away Death with his clever hands. 'I wish that man would come,' he said at twilight. 'I want you to leave the nursery now, you tired mother, and go away somewhere. I will call you if...I must.'

She went away.

She went downstairs in the twilight and lifted the rug from that other woman, where she lay, still deep in a drunken slumber, flushed and limp. The mother said: 'You are a murderess. I condemn you. I sentence you. I will execute you before my husband comes back.'

She brought down a narcotic from the medicine closet in her husband's bathroom.

'You gave my baby an overdose,' said the mother sternly. 'Now let us see what an overdose will do for you. You are trying to wake up. I see you twitching. Your heavy hands are awake. You shall not open your eyes again. You shall never again see my husband nor my child.'

She poured out the drug. She poured the narcotic down the gullet of the woman. And the thick hand stopped moving, the flush faded, there was no twitching at the coat-sleeve of consciousness.

When that body was deeply, deeply drugged, she took it by the shoulders and dragged it out of the house.

It was almost night already. Fireflies came in and out silently at different levels in the still tall air. She dragged the unconscious body across the flower-beds and the turf and along the paths to the farthest corner of the garden behind some bushes under the brick wall. And there she dug a deep grave. For hours she dug, patiently, strongly, dug the deepest grave ever dug by a woman for the body of a woman. And into it she rolled that body. It fell and turned over with its face in the damp earth. And she buried it alive.

She tramped down the dirt and trampled down the sod until it fitted tight and smooth above the drugged and smothered woman.

'I know you are not dead,' said the woman who stood above and saw that there were little white stars now in the garden. 'I know that you are not dead. But you are buried under the earth and the earth is the only thing as heavy and as strong as you are. If you climb up out of the earth again, you must be weak and changed.'

She went back into the house.

The specialist had come and was working over the baby. They would not let her come into the room.

She went to her bed and lay under the sheet, wet and shivering. All night she was not called. She lay awake, shivering and wet.

She found that she thought long, long thoughts about a strange bold child who years ago had crawled into her garden by the dry ditch beneath the wall. Was she sorry for that creature whom she had buried alive? Had she ever loved her at all? Before hate began, had she loved that companion of her guilty loneliness a little? Could she have loved her more?

Too late. Too late now, she told her shivering heart. That girl is buried in the garden, she cannot breathe. Her mouth is in the earth. She has gone back to the earth. Too late to laugh, too late to love, too late to understand. But...how strong she had been! How brave!

Her husband came and stood beside her. He was pale, ashamed, exalted. There were tears upon him.

'The baby is alive...will live,' he said.

He wept with his head upon his wife's sick breast.

He never asked a single question about the other woman. At first he did not even seem to notice that she was no longer there. But, after a time, he began to look furtively about the house, as though he had lost something. His wife smiled to her own heart. Let him look. Oh, let him look. He saw her smile and his eyes were hurt and secretive and frightened, but he could not help looking for what was lost.

He went out into the garden. Every night when the dark stood up amongst the trees and the wind blew and he heard the jungle music from the Inn, he would go as though absently into the garden and she would hear him wandering about, looking for some one. She would then play the piano loudly, scornfully, in triumph. She knew that he would never find the other woman. Sometimes, when he thought the trees were loud enough in the wind to cover the sound of his voice, he called softly. He called a name. His voice was fearful and full of pain. She played louder than the trees were roaring to drown her husband's troubled, calling voice.

Then he began to search in the lanes and in the town. If he saw some one that looked a little like that woman he would follow her home and question her. His wife did not care. She knew that he could never find what he looked for and that he could never be satisfied. He might fancy a resemblance but that would only sharpen his longing for the original, his longing and his fear. So she was serene and cool and patient. Some day he would be tired of searching. He would give up.

But he began to travel through the world. He went on business trips to distant countries and he was sad to go. He would kiss his wife and his daughter tenderly. She knew that he was still looking, still searching for what was lost.

When he came home, he would be kind and gentle. She loved him faithfully and sadly. She was satisfied because she had buried that woman so deeply in the earth. She found life tranquil, serene, and she was more and more absorbed in the health and the joy of the little growing girl, soothed by the intermittent presence of the man she loved. It was enough for her now that he was a kind father and a tender husband . . . when he was at home. Let him search, let him search the whole world over until he should be tired. She would not let her heart be troubled by that long, vain, secret search.

She was happiest when she sat in her window and watched the child playing in the garden. How pretty and graceful the little creature was with her light limbs and spreading, flying hair. It was beautiful to see her dance and run, singing high, singing low, and hiding from mother, to jump out with a Boo and a cataract of mirth.

One afternoon, the mother had gone out upon an errand and came in late. Her arms were hungry for the child. She ran up to the nursery. It was empty. The house was all empty and out in the garden it was already dusk. The wind was blowing a little now and then. She went to the door which opened from the drawing-room to the garden and called...'My Pet! My Pet!'

The child came running like a little hungry dog, threw herself bodily against her mother, hugged her close, close, close, kissed her as though she would never be done.

'My Mummy. My pretty Mum. I'm so glad that you are home.'

And the mother, holding her off a little, looked down and saw a tiny smear of blood on the child's rosy face.

DOUBLE BIRTHDAY[1]

WILLA CATHER

I

EVEN in American cities, which seem so much alike, where people seem all to be living the same lives, striving for the same things, thinking the same thoughts, there are still individuals a little out of tune with the times — there are still survivals of a past more loosely woven, there are disconcerting beginnings of a future yet unforeseen.

Coming out of the gray stone Court House in Pittsburgh on a dark November afternoon, Judge Hammersley encountered one of these men whom one does not readily place, whom one is, indeed, a little embarrassed to meet, because they have not got on as they should. The Judge saw him mounting the steps outside, leaning against the wind, holding his soft felt hat on with his hand, his head thrust forward — hurrying with a light, quick step, and so intent upon his own purposes that the Judge could have gone out by a side door and avoided the meeting. But that was against his principles.

'Good-day, Albert,' he muttered, seeming to feel, himself, all the embarrassment of the encounter, for the other

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snatched off his hat with a smile of very evident pleasure, and something like pride. His gesture bared an attractive head — small, well-set, definite, and smooth, one of those heads that look as if they had been turned out of some hard, rich wood by a workman deft with the lathe. His smooth-shaven face was dark — a warm coffee color — and his hazel eyes were warm and lively. He was not young, but his features had a kind of quicksilver mobility. His manner toward the stiff, frowning Judge was respectful and admiring — not in the least self-conscious.

The Judge inquired after his health and that of his uncle.

'Uncle Albert is splendidly preserved for his age. Frail, and can't stand any strain, but perfectly all right if he keeps to his routine. He's going to have a birthday soon. He will be eighty on the first day of December, and I shall be fifty-five on the same day. I was named after him because I was born on his twenty-fifth birthday.'

'Umph.' The Judge glanced from left to right as if this announcement were in bad taste, but he put a good face on it and said with a kind of testy heartiness: 'That will be an — occasion. I'd like to remember it in some way. Is there anything your uncle would like, any — recognition?' He stammered and coughed.

Young Albert Engelhardt, as he was called, laughed apologetically, but with confidence. 'I think there is, Judge Hammersley. Indeed, I'd thought of coming to you to ask a favor. I am going to have a little supper for him, and you know he likes good wine. In these dirty bootlegging times, it's hard to get.'

'Certainly, certainly.' The Judge spoke up quickly, and for the first time looked Albert squarely in the eye. 'Don't give him any of that bootleg stuff. I can find something in my cellar. Come out to-morrow night after eight, with a gripsack of some sort. Very glad to help you out, Albert. Glad the old fellow holds up so well. Thank'ee, Albert,' as Engelhardt swung the heavy door open and held it for him to pass.

Judge Hammersley's car was waiting for him, and on the ride home to Squirrel Hill he thought with vexation about the Engelhardts. He was really a sympathetic man, and though so stern of manner, he had deep affections; was fiercely loyal to old friends, old families, and old ideals. He didn't think highly of what is called success in the world to-day, but such as it was he wanted his friends to have it, and was vexed with them when they missed it. He was vexed with Albert for unblushingly, almost proudly, declaring that he was fifty-five years old, when he had nothing whatever to show for it. He was the last of the Engelhardt boys, and they had none of them had anything to show. They all died much worse off in the world than they began. They began with a flourishing glass factory up the river, a comfortable fortune, a fine old house on the Park in Allegheny, a good standing in the community; and it was all gone, melted away.

Old August Engelhardt was a thrifty, energetic man, though pig-headed — Judge Hammersley's friend and one of his first clients. August's five sons had sold the factory and wasted the money in fantastic individual enterprises, lost the big house, and now they were all dead except Albert. They ought all to be alive, with estates and factories and families. To be sure, they had that queer German streak in them; but so had old August, and it hadn't prevented his amounting to something. Their bringing-up was wrong; August had too free a hand, he was too proud of his five handsome boys, and too conceited. Too much tennis, Rhine-wine punch, music, and silliness. They were always running over to New York, like this Albert. Somebody, when asked what in the world young Albert had ever done with his inheritance, had laughingly replied that he had spent it on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Judge Hammersley didn't see how Albert could hold his head up. He had some small job in the County Clerk's office, was dependent upon it, had nothing else but the poor little house on the South Side where he lived with his old uncle. The county took care of him for the sake of his father, who had been a gallant officer in the Civil War, and afterward a public-spirited citizen and a generous employer of labor. But, as Judge Hammersley had bitterly remarked to Judge Merriman when Albert's name happened to come up, 'If it weren't for his father's old friends seeing that he got something, that fellow wouldn't be able to make a living.' Next to a charge of dishonesty, this was the worst that could be said of any man.

Judge Hammersley's house out on Squirrel Hill sat under a grove of very old oak trees. He lived alone, with his daughter, Margaret Parmenter, who was a widow. She had a great many engagements, but she usually managed to dine at home with her father, and that was about as much society as he cared for. His house was comfortable in an old-fashioned way, well appointed — especially the library, the room in which he lived when he was not in bed or at the Court House. To-night, when he came down to dinner, Mrs. Parmenter was already at the table, dressed for an evening party. She was tall, handsome, with a fine, easy carriage, and her face was both hard and sympathetic, like her father's. She had not, however, his stiffness of manner, that contraction of the muscles which was his unconscious protest at any irregularity in the machinery of life. She accepted blunders and accidents smoothly if not indifferently.

As the old colored man pulled back the Judge's chair for him, he glanced at his daughter from under his eyebrows.

'I saw that son of old Gus Engelhardt's this afternoon,' he said in an angry, challenging tone.

As a young girl his daughter had used to take up the challenge and hotly defend the person who had displeased or disappointed her father. But as she grew older she was conscious of that same feeling in herself when people fell short of what she expected; and she understood now that when her father spoke as if he were savagely attacking some one, it merely meant that he was disappointed or sorry for them; he never spoke thus of persons for whom he had no feeling. So she said calmly:

'Oh, did you really? I haven't seen him for years, not since the war. How was he looking? Shabby?'

'Not so shabby as he ought to. That fellow's likely to be in want one of these days.'

'I'm afraid so,' Mrs. Parmenter sighed. 'But I believe he would be rather plucky about it.'

The Judge shrugged. 'He's coming out here to-morrow night, on some business for his uncle.'

'Then I'll have a chance to see for myself. He must look much older. I can't imagine his ever looking really old and settled, though.'

'See that you don't ask him to stay. I don't want the fellow hanging around. He'll transact his business and get it over. He had the face to admit to me that he'll be fifty-five years old on the first of December. He's giving some sort of birthday party for old Albert, a-hem.' The Judge coughed formally, but was unable to check a smile; his lips sarcastic, but his eyes full of sly humor.

'Can he be as old as that? Yes, I suppose so. When we were both at Mrs. Sterrett's, in Rome, I was fifteen, and he must have been about thirty.'

Her father coughed. 'He'd better have been in Homestead!'

Mrs. Parmenter looked up; that was rather commonplace, for her father. 'Oh, I don't know. Albert would never have been much use in Homestead, and he was very useful to Mrs. Sterrett in Rome.'

'What did she want the fellow hanging round for? All the men of her family amounted to something.'

'To too much! There must be some butterflies if one is going to give house-parties, and the Sterretts and Dents were all heavyweights. He was in Rome a long while; three years, I think. He had a gorgeous time. Anyway, he learned to speak Italian very well, and that helps him out now, doesn't it? You still send for him at the Court House when you need an interpreter?'

'That's not often. He picks up a few dollars. Nice business for his father's son.'

After dinner the Judge retired to his library, where the gas fire was lit, and his book at hand, with a paper-knife inserted to mark the place where he had left off reading last night at exactly ten-thirty. On his way he went to the front door, opened it, turned on the porch light, and looked at the thermometer, making an entry in a little notebook. In a few moments his daughter, in an evening cloak, stopped at the library door to wish him good-night and went down the hall. He listened for the closing of the front door; it was a reassuring sound to him. He liked the feeling of an orderly house, empty for himself and his books all evening. He was deeply read in divinity, philosophy, and in the early history of North America.

II

While Judge Hammersley was settling down to his book, Albert Engelhardt was sitting at home in a garnet velvet smoking-jacket, at an upright piano, playing Schumann's 'Kreisleriana' for his old uncle. They lived, certainly, in a queer part of the city, on one of the dingy streets that run uphill off noisy Carson Street, in a little two-story brick house, a workingman's house, that Albert's father had taken over long ago in satisfaction of a bad debt. When his father had acquired this building, it was a mere nothing — the Engelhardts were then living in their big, many-gabled, so-German house on the Park, in Allegheny; and they owned many other buildings, besides the glass factory up the river. After the father's death, when the sons converted houses and lands into cash, this forgotten little house on the South Side had somehow never been sold or mortgaged. A day came when Albert, the last surviving son, found this piece of property the only thing he owned in the world besides his personal effects. His uncle, having had a crushing disappointment, wanted at that time to retire from the practice of medicine, so Albert settled in the South Side house and took his uncle with him.

He had not gone there in any mood of despair. His impoverishment had come about gradually, and before he took possession of these quarters, he had been living in a boarding-house; the change seemed going up instead of going down in the world. He was delighted to have a home again, to unpack his own furniture and his books and pictures — the most valuable in the world to him, because they were full of his own history and that of his family, were like part of his own personality. All the years and the youth which had slipped away from him still clung to these things.

At his piano, under his Degas drawing in black and red — three ballet girls at the bar — or seated at his beautiful inlaid writing-table, he was still the elegant young man who sat there long ago. His rugs were fine ones, his collection of books was large and very personal. It was full of works which, though so recent, were already immensely far away and diminished. The glad, rebellious excitement they had once caused in the world he could recapture only in memory. Their power to seduce and stimulate the young, the living, was utterly gone. There was a complete file of the 'Yellow Book,' for instance; who could extract sweet poison from those volumes now? A portfolio of the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley — decadent, had they been called? A slender, padded volume — the complete works of a great new poet, Ernest Dowson. Oscar Wilde, whose wickedness was now so outdone that he looked like the poor old hat of some Victorian belle, wired and feathered and garlanded and faded.

Albert and his uncle occupied only the upper floor of their house. The ground floor was let to an old German glass engraver who had once been a workman in August Engelhardt's factory. His wife was a good cook, and every night sent their dinner up hot on the dumb-waiter. The house opened directly upon the street, and to reach Albert's apartment one went down a narrow paved alley at the side of the building and mounted an outside flight of wooden stairs at the back. They had only four rooms — two bedrooms, a snug sitting-room in which they dined, and a small kitchen where Albert got breakfast every morning. After he had gone to work, Mrs. Rudder came up from downstairs to wash the dishes and do the cleaning, and to cheer up old Doctor Engelhardt.

At dinner this evening Albert had told his uncle about meeting Judge Hammersley, and of his particular inquiries after his health. The old man was very proud and received this intelligence as his due, but could not conceal a certain gratification.

'The daughter, she still lives with him? A damned fine-looking woman!' he muttered between his teeth. Uncle Albert, a bachelor, had been a professed connoisseur of ladies in his day.

Immediately after dinner, unless he were going somewhere, Albert always played for his uncle for an hour. He played extremely well. Doctor Albert sat by the fire smoking his cigar. While he listened, the look of wisdom and professional authority faded, and many changes went over his face, as if he were playing a little drama to himself; moods of scorn and contempt, of rakish vanity, sentimental melancholy...and something remote and lonely. The Doctor had always flattered himself that he resembled a satyr, because the tops of his ears were slightly pointed; and he used to hint to his nephews that his large pendulous nose was the index of an excessively amorous disposition. His mouth was full of long, yellowish teeth, all crowded irregularly, which he snapped and ground together when he uttered denunciations of modern art or the Eighteenth Amendment. He wore his mustache short and twisted up at the corners. His thick gray hair was cut close and upright, in the bristling French fashion. His hands were small and fastidious, high-knuckled, quite elegant in shape.

Across the Doctor's throat ran a long, jagged scar. He used to mutter to his young nephews that it had been justly inflicted by an outraged husband — a pistol shot in the dark. But his brother August always said that he had been cut by glass, when, wandering about in the garden one night after drinking too much punch, he had fallen into the cold-frames.

After playing Schumann for some time, Albert, without stopping, went into Stravinsky.

Doctor Engelhardt by the gas fire stirred uneasily, turned his important head toward his nephew, and snapped his teeth. 'Br-r-r, that stuff! Poverty of imagination, poverty of musical invention; *fin-de-siècle!*'

Albert laughed. 'I thought you were asleep. Why will you use that phrase? It shows your vintage. Like this any better?' He began the second act of 'Pelléas et Mélisande.'

The Doctor nodded. 'Yes, that is better, though I'm not fooled by it.' He wrinkled his nose as if he were smelling out something, and squinted with superior discernment. 'To this *canaille* that is all very new; but to me it goes back to Bach.'

'Yes, if you like.'

Albert, like Judge Hammersley, was jealous of his solitude — liked a few hours with his books. It was time for Uncle Doctor to be turning in. He ended the music by playing half a dozen old German songs which the old fellow always wanted but never asked for. The Doctor's chin sank into his shirt-front. His face took on a look of deep, resigned sadness; his features, losing their conscious importance, seemed to shrink a good deal. His nephew knew that this was the mood in which he would most patiently turn to rest and darkness. Doctor Engelhardt had had a heavy loss late in life. Indeed, he had suffered the same loss twice.

As Albert left the piano, the Doctor rose and walked a little stiffly across the room. At the door of his chamber he paused, brought his hand up in a kind of military salute and gravely bowed, so low that one saw only the square upstanding gray brush on the top of his head and the long pear-shaped nose. After this he closed the door behind him. Albert sat down to his book. Very soon he heard the bath-water running. Having taken his bath, the Doctor would get into bed immediately to avoid catching cold. Luckily, he usually slept well. Perhaps he dreamed of that unfortunate young singer whom he sometimes called, to his nephew and himself, 'the lost Lenore.'

III

Long years ago, when the Engelhardt boys were still living in the old house in Allegheny with their mother, after their father's death, Doctor Engelhardt was practising medicine, and had an office on the Park, five minutes' walk from his sister-in-law. He usually lunched with the family, after his morning office hours were over. They always had a good cook, and the Allegheny market was one of the best in the world. Mrs. Engelhardt went to market every morning of her life; such vegetables and poultry, such cheeses and sausages and smoked and pickled fish as one could buy there! Soon after she had made her rounds, boys in white aprons would come running across the Park with her purchases. Every one knew the Engelhardt house, built of many-colored bricks, with gables and turrets, and on the west a large stained-glass window representing a scene on the Grand Canal in Venice, the Church of Santa Maria della Salute in the background, in the foreground a gondola with a slender gondolier. People said August and Mrs. Engelhardt should be solidly seated in the prow to make the picture complete.

Doctor Engelhardt's especial interest was the throat, preferably the singing throat. He had studied every scrap of manuscript that Manuel Garcia had left behind him, every reported conversation with him. He had doctored many singers, and imagined he had saved many voices. Pittsburgh air is not good for the throat, and traveling artists often had need of medical assistance. Conductors of orchestras and singing societies recommended Doctor Engelhardt because he was very lax about collecting fees from professionals, especially if they sent him a photograph floridly inscribed. He had been a medical student in New York while Patti was still singing; his biography fell into chapters of great voices as a turfman's falls into chapters of fast horses. This passion for the voice had given him the feeling of distinction, of being unique in his profession, which had made him all his life a well-satisfied and happy man, and had left him a poor one.

One morning when the Doctor was taking his customary walk about the Park before office hours, he stopped in front of the Allegheny High School Building because he heard singing — a chorus of young voices. It was June, and the chapel windows were open. The Doctor listened for a few moments, then tilted his head on one side and laid his forefinger on his pear-shaped nose with an anxious, inquiring squint. Among the voices he certainly heard one Voice. The final bang of the piano was followed by laughter and buzzing. A boy ran down the steps. The Doctor stopped him and learned that this was a rehearsal for Class Day exercises. Just then the piano began again, and in a moment he heard the same voice, alone:

'Still wie die Nacht, tief wie das Meer.'

No, he was not mistaken; a full, rich soprano voice, so easy, so sure; a golden warmth, even in the high notes. Before the second verse was over, he went softly into the building, into the chapel, and for the first time laid eyes on Marguerite Thiesinger. He saw a sturdy, blooming German girl standing beside the piano; good-natured, one knew at a glance, glowing with health. She looked like a big peony just burst into bloom and full of sunshine — sunshine in her auburn hair, in her rather small hazel eyes. When she finished the song, she began waltzing on the platform with one of the boys.

Doctor Albert waited by the door, and accosted her as she came out carrying her coat and schoolbooks. He introduced himself and asked her if she would go over to Mrs. Engelhardt's for lunch and sing for him.

Oh, yes! She knew one of the Engelhardt boys, and she'd always wanted to see that beautiful window from the inside.

She went over at noon and sang for them before lunch, and the family took stock of her. She spoke a very ordinary German and her English was still worse; her people were very ordinary. Her flat, slangy speech was somehow not vulgar because it was naïve — she knew no other way. The boys were delighted with her because she was jolly and interested in everything. She told them about the glorious good times she had going to dances in suburban Turner halls, and to picnics in the damp, smoke-smeared woods up the Allegheny. The boys roared with laughter at the unpromising places she mentioned. But she had the warm bubble in her blood that makes everything fair; even being a junior in the Allegheny High School was 'glorious,' she told them!

She came to lunch with them again and again, because she liked the boys, and she thought the house magnificent. The Doctor observed her narrowly all the while. Clearly she had no ambition, no purpose; she sang to be agreeable. She was not very intelligent, but she had a kind of personal warmth that, to his way of thinking, was much better than brains. He took her over to his office and poked and pounded her. When he had finished his examination, he stood before the foolish, happy young thing and inclined his head in his peculiar fashion.

'Miss Thiesinger, I have the honor to announce to you that you are on the threshold of a brilliant, possibly a great career.'

She laughed her fresh, ringing laugh. 'Aren't you nice, though, to take so much trouble about me!'

The Doctor lifted a forefinger. 'But for that you must turn your back on this childishness, these sniveling sapheads you play marbles with. You must uproot this triviality.' He made a gesture as if he were wringing a chicken's neck, and Marguerite was thankful she was able to keep back a giggle.

Doctor Engelhardt wanted her to go to New York with him at once, and begin her studies. He was quite ready to finance her. He had made up his mind to stake everything upon this voice.

But not at all. She thought it was lovely of him, but she was very fond of her classmates, and she wanted to graduate with her class next year. Moreover, she had just been given a choir position in one of the biggest churches in Pittsburgh, though she was still a schoolgirl; she was going to have money and pretty clothes for the first time in her life and wouldn't miss it all for anything.

All through the next school year Doctor Albert went regularly to the church where she sang, watched and cherished her, expostulated and lectured, trying to awaken fierce ambition in his big peony flower. She was very much interested in other things just then, but she was patient with him; accepted his devotion with good-nature, respected his wisdom, and bore with his 'stagey' manners as she called them. She graduated in June, and immediately after Commencement, when she was not quite nineteen, she eloped with an insurance agent and went to Chicago to live. She wrote Doctor Albert: 'I do appreciate all your kindness to me, but I guess I will let my voice rest for the present.'

He took it hard. He burned her photographs and the foolish little scrawls she had written to thank him for presents. His life would have been dull and empty if he hadn't had so many reproaches to heap upon her in his solitude. How often and how bitterly he arraigned her for the betrayal of so beautiful a gift. Where did she keep it hidden now, that jewel, in the sordid life she had chosen?

Three years after her elopement, suddenly, without warning, Marguerite Thiesinger walked into his office on Arch Street one morning and told him she had come back to study! Her husband's 'affairs were involved'; he was now quite willing that she should make as much as possible of her voice — and out of it.

'My voice is better than it was,' she said, looking at him out of her rather small eyes — greenish yellow, with a glint of gold in them. He believed her. He suddenly realized how uncommonly truthful she had always been. Rather stupid, unimaginative, but carried joyously along on a flood of warm vitality, and truthful to a degree he had hardly known in any woman or in any man. And now she was a woman.

He took her over to his sister-in-law's. Albert, who chanced to be at home, was sent to the piano. She was not mistaken. The Doctor kept averting his head to conceal his delight, to conceal, once or twice, a tear — the moisture that excitement and pleasure brought to his eyes. The voice, after all, he told himself, is a physical thing. She had been growing and ripening like fruit in the sun, and the voice with the body. Doctor Engelhardt stepped softly out of the music-room into the conservatory and addressed a potted palm, his lips curling back from his teeth: 'So we get that out of you, *Monsieur le commis voyageur*, and now we throw you away like a squeezed lemon.'

When he returned to his singer, she addressed him very earnestly from under her spring hat covered with lilacs: 'Before my marriage, Doctor Engelhardt, you offered to take me to New York to a teacher, and lend me money to start on. If you still feel like doing it, I'm sure I could repay you before very long. I'll follow your instructions. What was it you used to tell me I must have — application and ambition?'

He glared at her. 'Take note, Gretchen, that I change the prescription. There is something vulgar about ambition. Now we will play for higher stakes; for ambition read aspiration!' His index finger shot upward.

In New York he had no trouble in awakening the interest of his friends and acquaintances. Within a week he had got his protégée to a very fine artist, just then retiring from the Opera, a woman who had been a pupil of Pauline Garcia Viardot. In short, Doctor Engelhardt had realized the dream of a lifetime: he had discovered a glorious voice, backed by a rich vitality. Within a year Marguerite had one of the best church positions in New York; she insisted upon repaying her benefactor before she went abroad to complete her studies. Doctor Engelhardt went often to New York to counsel and advise, to gloat over his treasure. He often shivered as he crossed the Jersey ferry; he was afraid of Fate. He would tell over her assets on his fingers to reassure himself. You might have seen a small, self-important man of about fifty, standing by the rail of the ferryboat, his head impressively inclined as if he were addressing an amphitheatre full of students, gravely counting upon his fingers.

But Fate struck, and from the quarter least under suspicion — through that blooming, rounded, generously moulded young body, from that abundant, glowing health which the Doctor proudly called peasant vigor. Marguerite's success had brought to his office many mothers of singing daughters. He was not insensible to the compliment, but he usually dismissed them by dusting his fingers delicately in the air and growling, 'Yes, she can sing a little, she has a voice; *aber kleine, kleine!*' He exulted in the opulence of his cabbage rose. To his nephews he used to match her possibilities with the singers of that period. Emma Eames he called *die Puritan*, Geraldine Farrar *la voix blanche*, another was *trop raffinée*.

Marguerite had been in New York two years, her path one of uninterrupted progress, when she wrote the Doctor about a swelling of some sort; the surgeons wanted to operate. Doctor Albert took the next train for New York. An operation revealed that things were very bad indeed; a malignant growth, so far advanced that the knife could not check it. Her mother and grandmother had died of the same disease.

Poor Marguerite lived a year in a hospital for incurables. Every week-end when Doctor Albert went over to see her, he found great changes — it was rapid and terrible. That winter and spring he lived like a man lost in a dark morass, the Slave in the Dismal Swamp. He suffered more than his Gretchen, for she was singularly calm and hopeful to the very end, never doubting that she would get well.

The last time he saw her she had given up. But she was noble and sweet in mood, and so piteously apologetic for disappointing him — like a child who has broken something precious and is sorry. She was wasted, indeed, until she was scarcely larger than a child, her beautiful hair cut short, her hands like shadows, but still a stain of color in her cheeks.

'I'm so sorry I didn't do as you wanted instead of running off with Phil,' she said. 'I see now how little he cared about me — and you've just done everything. If I had my twenty-six years to live over, I'd live them very differently.'

Doctor Albert dropped her hand and walked to the window, the tears running down his face. '*Pourquoi, pourquoi?*' he muttered, staring blindly at that brutal square of glass. When he could control himself and came back to the chair at her bedside, she put her poor little sheared head out on his knee and lay smiling and breathing softly.

'I expect you don't believe in the hereafter,' she murmured. 'Scientific people hardly ever do. But if there is one, I'll not forget you. I'll love to remember you.'

When the nurse came to give her her hypodermic, Doctor Albert went out into Central Park and wandered about without knowing where or why, until he smelled something sweet which suddenly stopped his breath, and he sat down under a flowering linden tree. He dropped his face in his hands and cried like a woman. Youth, art, love, dreams, true-heartedness — why must they go out of the summer world into darkness? *Warum, warum?* He thought he had already suffered all that man could, but never had it come down on him like this. He sat on that bench like a drunken man or like a dying man, muttering Heine's words, 'God is a grimmer humorist than I. Nobody but God could have perpetrated anything so cruel.' She was ashamed, he remembered it afresh and struck his bony head with his clenched fist — ashamed at having been used like this; she was apologetic for the power, whatever it was, that had tricked her. 'Yes, by God, she apologized for God!'

The tortured man looked up through the linden branches at the blue arch that never answers. As he looked, his face relaxed, his breathing grew regular. His eyes were caught by puffy white clouds like the cherub-heads in Raphael's pictures, and something within him seemed to rise and travel with those clouds. The moment had come when he could bear no more . . . When he went back to the hospital that evening, he learned that she had died very quietly between eleven and twelve, the hour when he was sitting on the bench in the park.

Uncle Doctor now sometimes spoke to Albert out of a long silence: 'Anyway, I died for her; that was given to me. She never knew a death-struggle — she went to sleep. That struggle took place in my body. Her dissolution occurred within me.'

IV

Old Doctor Engelhardt walked abroad very little now. Sometimes on a fine Sunday, his nephew would put him aboard a street car that climbs the hills beyond Mount Oliver and take him to visit an old German graveyard and a monastery. Every afternoon, in good weather, he walked along the pavement which ran past the front door, as far as the first corner, where he bought his paper and cigarettes. If Elsa, the pretty little granddaughter of his housekeeper, ran out to join him and see him over the crossings, he would go a little farther. In the morning, while Mrs. Rudder did the sweeping and dusting, the Doctor took the air on an upstairs back porch, overhanging the court.

The court was bricked, and had an old-fashioned cistern and hydrant, and three ailanthus trees — the last growing things left to the Engelhardts, whose flowering shrubs and greenhouses had once been so well known in Allegheny. In these trees, which he called *les Chinoises*, the Doctor took a great interest. The clothes line ran about their trunks in a triangle, and on Mondays he looked down upon the washing. He was too near-sighted to be distressed by the sooty flakes descending from neighboring chimneys upon the white sheets. He enjoyed the dull green leaves of his *Chinoises* in summer, scarcely moving on breathless, sticky nights, when the moon came up red over roofs and smokestacks. In autumn he watched the yellow fronds drop down upon the brick pavement like great ferns. Now, when his birthday was approaching, the trees were bare; and he thought he liked them best so, especially when all the knotty, curly twigs were outlined by a scurf of snow.

As he sat there, wrapped up in rugs, a stiff felt hat on his head — he would never hear to a cap — and woolen gloves on his hands, Elsa, the granddaughter, would bring her cross-stitch and chatter to him. Of late she had been sewing on her trousseau, and that amused the Doctor highly — though it meant she would soon go to live in lower Allegheny, and he would lose her. Her young man, Carl Abberbock, had now a half-interest in a butcher stall in the Allegheny market, and was in a hurry to marry.

When Mrs. Rudder had quite finished her work and made the place neat, she would come and lift the rug from his knees and say, 'Time to go in, Herr Doctor.'

V

The next evening after dinner, Albert left the house with a suitcase, the bag that used to make so many trips to New York in the opera season. He stopped downstairs to ask Elsa to carry her sewing up and sit with his uncle for a while, then he took the street car across the Twenty-Second Street Bridge by the blazing steel mills. As he waited on Soho Hill to catch a Fifth Avenue car, the heavy, frosty air suddenly began to descend in snowflakes. He wished he had worn his old overcoat; didn't like to get this one wet. He had to consider such things now. He was hesitating about a taxi when his car came, bound for the East End.

He got off at the foot of one of the streets running up Squirrel Hill, and slowly mounted. Everything was white with the softly falling snow. Albert knew all the places; old school friends lived in many of them. Big, turreted stone houses, set in ample grounds with fine trees and shrubbery and driveways. He stepped aside now and then to avoid a car, rolling from the gravel drives on to the stone-block pavement. If the occupants had recognized Albert, they would have felt sorry for him. But he did not feel sorry for himself. He looked up at the lighted windows, the red gleam on the snowy rhododendron bushes, and shrugged. His old schoolfellows went to New York now as often as he had done in his youth; but they went to consult doctors, to put children in school, or to pay the bills of incorrigible sons.

He thought he had had the best of it; he had gone a-Maying while it was May. This solid comfort, this ironbound security, didn't appeal to him much. These massive houses, after all, held nothing but the heavy domestic routine; all the frictions and jealousies and discontents of family life. Albert felt light and free, going up the hill in his thin overcoat. He believed he had had a more interesting life than most of his friends who owned real estate. He could still amuse himself, and he had lived to the full all the revolutions in art and music that his period covered. He wouldn't at this moment exchange his life and his memories — his memories of his teacher, Rafael Joseffy, for instance — for any one of these massive houses and the life of the man who paid the upkeep. If Mephistopheles were to emerge from the rhododendrons and stand behind his shoulder with such an offer, he wouldn't hesitate. Money? Oh, yes, he would like to have some, but not what went with it.

He turned in under Judge Hammersley's fine oak trees. A car was waiting in the driveway, near the steps by which he mounted to the door. The colored man admitted him, and just as he entered the hall, Mrs. Parmenter came down the stairs.

'Ah, it's you, Albert! Father said you were coming in this evening, and I've kept the car waiting, to have a glimpse of you.'

Albert had dropped his hat and bag, and stood holding her hand with the special grace and appreciation she remembered in him.

'What a pleasure to see you!' he exclaimed, and she knew from his eyes it was. 'It doesn't happen often, but it's always such a surprise and pleasure.' He held her hand as if he wanted to keep her there. 'It's a long while since the Villa Scipione, isn't it?'

They stood for a moment in the shrouded hall light. Mrs. Parmenter was looking very handsome, and Albert was thinking that she had all her father's authority, with much more sweep and freedom. She was impulsive and careless, where he was strong and shrinking — a powerful man terribly afraid of little annoyances. His daughter, Albert believed, was not afraid of anything. She had proved more than once that if you aren't afraid of gossip, it is harmless. She did as she pleased. People took it. Even Parmenter had taken it, and he was rather a stiff sort.

Mrs. Parmenter laughed at his allusion to their summer at Mrs. Sterrett's, in Rome, and gave him her coat to hold.

'You remember, Albert, how you and I used to get up early on fête-days, and go down to the garden gate to see the young king come riding in from the country at the head of the horse guards? How the sun flashed on his helmet! Heavens, I saw him last summer! So grizzled and battered.'

'And we were always going to run away to Russia together, and now there is no Russia. Everything has changed but you, Mrs. Parmenter.'

'Wish I could think so. But you don't know any Mrs. Parmenter. I'm Marjorie, please. How often I think of those gay afternoons I had with you and your brothers in the garden behind your old Allegheny house. There's such a lot I want to talk to you about. And this birthday — when is it? May I send your uncle some flowers? I always remember his goodness to poor Marguerite Thiesinger. He never got over that, did he? But I'm late and father is waiting. Good-night, you'll have a message from me.'

Albert bent and kissed her hand in the old-fashioned way, keeping it a moment and breathing in softly the fragrance of her clothes, her furs, her person, the fragrance of that other world to which he had once belonged and out of which he had slipped so gradually that he scarcely realized it, unless suddenly brought face to face with something in it that was charming. Releasing her, he caught up his hat and opened the door to follow her, but she pushed him back with her arm and smiled over her shoulder. 'No, no, father is waiting for you in the library. Good-night.'

Judge Hammersley stood in the doorway, fingering a bunch of keys and blinking with impatience to render his service and have done with it. The library opened directly into the hall; he couldn't help overhearing his daughter, and he disliked her free and unreproachful tone with this man who was young when he should be old, single when he should be married, and penniless when he should be well fixed.

Later, as Albert came down the hill with two bottles of the Judge's best champagne in his bag, he was thinking that the greatest disadvantage of being poor and dropping out of the world was that he didn't meet attractive women any more. The men he could do without, Heaven knew! But the women, the ones like Marjorie Hammersley, were always grouped where the big fires burned — money and success and big houses and fast boats and French cars; it was natural.

Mrs. Parmenter, as she drove off, resolved that she would see more of Albert and his uncle — wondered why she had let an old friendship lapse for so long. When she was a little girl, she used often to spend a week with her aunt in Allegheny. She was fond of the aunt, but not of her cousins, and she used to escape whenever she could to the Engelhardts' garden only a few doors away. No grass in that garden — in Allegheny grass was always dirty — but glittering gravel, and lilac hedges beautiful in spring, and barberry hedges red in the fall, and flowers and bird cages and striped awnings, boys lying about in tennis clothes, making mint juleps before lunch, having coffee under the sycamore trees after dinner. The Engelhardt boys were different, like people in a book or a play. All the young men in her set were scornful of girls until they wanted one; then they grabbed her rather brutally, and it was over. She had felt that the Engelhardt boys admired her without in the least wanting to grab her, that they enjoyed her æsthetically, so to speak, and it pleased her to be liked in that way.

VI

On the afternoon of the first of December, Albert left his desk in the County Clerk's office at four o'clock, feeling very much as he used to when school was dismissed in the middle of the afternoon just before the Christmas holidays. It was his uncle's birthday that was in his mind; his own, of course, gave him no particular pleasure. If one stopped to think of that, there was a shiver waiting round the corner. He walked over the Smithfield Street Bridge. A thick brown fog made everything dark, and there was a feeling of snow in the air. The lights along the sheer cliffs of Mount Washington, high above the river, were already lighted. When Albert was a boy, those cliffs, with the row of lights far up against the sky, always made him think of some far-away, cloud-set city in Asia; the forbidden city, he used to call it. Well, that was a long time ago; a lot of water had run under this bridge since then, and kingdoms and empires had fallen. Meanwhile, Uncle Doctor was still hanging on, and things were not so bad with them as they might be. Better not reflect too much. He hopped on board a street-car, and old women with market baskets shifted to make room for him.

When he reached home, the table was already set in the living-room. Beautiful table linen had been one of his mother's extravagances (he had boxes of it, meant to give some to Elsa on her marriage), and Mrs. Rudder laundered it with pious care. She had put out the best silver.

He had forgotten to order flowers, but the old woman had brought up one of her blooming geraniums for a centerpiece. Uncle Albert was dozing by the fire in his old smoking jacket, a volume of Schiller on his knee.

'I'll put the studs in your shirt for you. Time to dress Uncle Doctor.'

The old man blinked and smiled drolly. 'So? *Die* claw-hammer?'

'Of course *die* claw-hammer! Elsa is going to a masquerade with Carl, and they are coming up to see us before they go. I promised her you would dress.'

'Albert,' the Doctor called him back, beckoned with a mysterious smile; 'where did you get that wine now?'

'Oh, you found it when she put it on ice, did you? That's Judge Hammersley's, the best he had. He insisted on sending it to you, with his compliments and good wishes.'

Uncle Albert rose and drew up his shoulders somewhat pompously. 'From my own kind I still command recognition.' Then, dropping into homely vulgarity, he added, with a sidelong squint at his nephew, 'By God, some of that will feel good, running down the gullet.'

'You'll have all you want for once. It's a great occasion. Did you shave carefully? I'll take my bath, and then you must be ready for me.'

In half an hour Albert came out in his dress-clothes and found his uncle still reading his favorite poet. 'The trousers are too big,' the Doctor complained. 'Why not *die* claw-hammer and my old trousers? Elsa wouldn't notice.'

'Oh, yes, she would! She's seen these every day for five years. Quick change!'

Doctor Engelhardt submitted, and when he was dressed, surveyed himself in his mirror with satisfaction, though he slyly slipped a cotton handkerchief into his pocket instead of the linen one Albert had laid out. When they came back to the sitting room, Mrs. Rudder had been up again and had put on the wine glasses. There was still half an hour before dinner, and Albert sat down to play for his uncle. He was beginning to feel that it was all much ado about nothing, after all.

A gentle tap at the door, and Elsa came in with her young man. She was dressed as a Polish maiden, and Carl Abberbock was in a Highlander's kilt.

'Congratulations on your birthday, Herr Doctor, and I've brought you some flowers.' She went to his chair and bent down to be kissed, putting a bunch of violets in his hand.

The Doctor rose and stood looking down at the violets. 'Hey, you take me for a Bonapartist? What is Mussolini's flower, Albert? Advise your friends in Rome that a Supreme Dictator should always have a flower.' He turned the young girl around in the light and teased her about her thin arms — such an old joke, but she laughed for him.

'But that's the style now, Herr Doctor. Everybody wants to be as thin as possible.'

'Bah, there are no styles in such things! A man will always want something to take hold of, till Hell freezes over! Is dat so, Carl?'

Carl, a very broad-faced, smiling young man with outstanding ears, was suddenly frightened into silence by the entrance of a fine lady, and made for the door to get his knotty knees into the shadow. Elsa, too, caught her breath and shrank away.

Without knocking, Mrs. Parmenter, her arms full of roses, appeared in the doorway, and just behind her was her chauffeur, carrying a package. 'Put it down there and wait for me,' she said to him, then swept into the room and lightly embraced Doctor Engelhardt without waiting to drop the flowers or take off her furs. 'I wanted to congratulate you in person. They told me below that you were receiving. Please take these flowers, Albert. I want a moment's chat with Doctor Engelhardt.'

The Doctor stood with singular gravity, like some one in a play, the violets still in his hand. 'To what,' he muttered with his best bow, 'to what am I indebted for such distinguished consideration?'

'To your own distinction, my dear sir — always one of the most distinguished men I ever knew.'

The Doctor, to whom flattery was thrice dearer than to ordinary men, flushed deeply. But he was not so exalted that he did not notice his little friend of many lonely hours slipping out of the entry-way — the bare-kneed Highland chief had already got down the wooden stairs. 'Elsa,' he called commandingly, 'come here and kiss me good-night.' He pulled her forward. 'This is Elsa Rudder, Mrs. Parmenter, and my very particular friend. You should have seen her beautiful hair before she cut it off.' Elsa reddened and glanced up to see whether the lady understood. Uncle Doctor kissed her on the forehead and ran his hand over her shingled head. 'Nineteen years,' he said softly. 'If the next nineteen are as happy, we won't bother about the rest. *Behüt' dich, Gott!*'

'Thank you, Uncle Doctor. Good-night.'

After she fluttered out, he turned to Mrs. Parmenter. 'That little girl,' he said impressively, 'is the rose in winter. She is my heir. Everything I have, I leave to her.'

'Everything but my birthday present, please! You must drink that. I've brought you a bottle of champagne.'

Both Alberts began to laugh. 'But your father has already given us two!'

Mrs. Parmenter looked from one to the other. 'My father? Well, that is a compliment! It's unheard of. Of course he and I have different lockers. We could never agree when to open them. I don't think he's opened his since the Chief Justice dined with him. Now I must leave you. Be as jolly as the night is long; with three bottles you ought to do very well! The good woman downstairs said your dinner would be served in half an hour.'

Both men started toward her. 'Don't go. Please, please, stay and dine with us! It's the one thing we needed.' Albert began to entreat her in Italian, a language his uncle did not understand. He confessed that he had been freezing up for the last hour, couldn't go on with it alone. 'One can't do such things without a woman — a beautiful woman.'

'Thank you, Albert. But I've a dinner engagement; I ought to be at the far end of Ellsworth Avenue this minute.'

'But this is once in a lifetime — for him! Still, if your friends are waiting for you, you can't. Certainly not.' He took up her coat and held it for her. But how the light had gone out of his face; he looked so different, so worn, as he stood holding her coat at just the right height. She slipped her arms into it, then pulled them out. 'I can't, but I just will! Let me write a note, please. I'll send Henry on with it and tell them I'll drop in after dinner.' Albert pressed her hand gratefully and took her to his desk. 'Oh, Albert, your Italian writing table, and all the lovely things on it, just as it stood in your room at the

Villa Scipione! You used to let me write letters at it. You had the nicest way with young girls. If I had a daughter, I'd want you to do it all over again.'

She scratched a note, and Albert put a third place at the table. He noticed Uncle Doctor slip away, and come back with his necktie set straight, attended by a wave of *eau de cologne.* While he was lighting the candles and bringing in the wine cooler, Mrs. Parmenter sat down beside the Doctor, accepted one of his cigarettes, and began to talk to him simply and naturally about Marguerite Thiesinger. Nothing could have been more tactful, Albert knew; nothing could give the old man more pleasure on his birthday. Albert himself couldn't do it any more; he had worn out his power of going over that sad story. He tried to make up for it by playing the songs she had sung.

'Albert,' said Mrs. Parmenter when they sat down to dinner, 'this is the only spot I know in the world that is before-the-war. You've got a period shut up in here; the last ten years of one century, and the first ten of another. Sitting here, I don't believe in aeroplanes, or jazz, or Cubists. My father is nearly as old as Doctor Engelhardt, and we never buy anything new; yet we haven't kept it out. How do you manage?'

Albert smiled a little ruefully. 'I suppose it's because we never have any young people about. They bring it in.'

'Elsa,' murmured the Doctor. 'But I see; she is only a child.'

'I'm sorry for the young people now,' Mrs. Parmenter went on. 'They seem to me coarse and bitter. There's nothing wonderful left for them, poor things; the war destroyed it all. Where could any girl find such a place to escape to as your mother's house, full of chests of linen like this? All houses now are like hotels; nothing left to cherish. Your house was wonderful! And what music we used to have. Do you remember the time you took me to hear Joseffy play the second Brahms, with Gericke? It was the last time I ever heard him. What did happen to him, Albert? Went to pieces in some way, didn't he?'

Albert sighed and shook his head; wine was apt to plunge him into pleasant, poetic melancholy. 'I don't know if any one knows. I stayed in Rome too long to know, myself. Before I went abroad, I'd been taking lessons with him right along — I saw no change in him, though he gave fewer and fewer concerts. When I got back, I wrote him the day I landed in New York — he was living up the Hudson then. I got a reply from his housekeeper, saying that he was not giving lessons, was ill and was seeing nobody. I went out to his place at once. I wasn't asked to come into the house. I was told to wait in the garden. I waited a long while. At last he came out, wearing white clothes, as he often did, a panama hat, carrying a little cane. He shook hands with me, asked me about Mrs. Sterrett — but he was another man, that's all. He was gone; he wasn't there. I was talking to his picture.'

'Drugs!' muttered the Doctor out of one corner of his mouth.

'Nonsense!' Albert shrugged in derision. 'Or if he did, that was secondary; a result, not a cause. He'd seen the other side of things; he'd let go. Something had happened in his brain that was not paresis.'

Mrs. Parmenter leaned forward. 'Did he *look* the same? Surely, he had the handsomest head in the world. Remember his forehead? Was he gray? His hair was a reddish chestnut, as I remember.'

'A little gray; not much. There was no change in his face, except his eyes. The bright spark had gone out, and his body had a sort of trailing languor when he moved.'

'Would he give you a lesson?'

'No. Said he wasn't giving any. Said he was sorry, but he wasn't seeing people at all any more. I remember he sat making patterns in the gravel with his cane. He frowned and said he simply couldn't see people; said the human face had become hateful to him — and the human voice! "I am sorry," he said, "but that is the truth." I looked at his left hand, lying on his knee. I wonder, Marjorie, that I had the strength to get up and go away. I felt as if everything had been drawn out of me. He got up and took my hand. I understood that I must leave. In desperation I asked him whether music didn't mean anything to him still. "Music," he said slowly, with just a ghost of his old smile, "yes — some music." He went back into the house. Those were the last words I ever heard him speak.'

'Oh, dear! And he had everything that is beautiful — and the name of an angel! But we're making the Doctor melancholy. Open another bottle, Albert — father did very well by you. We've not drunk a single toast. Many returns, we take for granted. Why not each drink a toast of our own, to something we care for.' She glanced at Doctor Engelhardt, who lifted the bunch of violets by his plate and smelled them absently. 'Now, Doctor Engelhardt, a toast!'

The Doctor put down his flowers, delicately took up his glass and held it directly in front of him; everything he did with his hands was deft and sure. A beautiful, a wonderful look came over his face as she watched him.

'I drink,' he said slowly, 'to a memory; to the lost Lenore.'

'And I,' said young Albert softly, 'to my youth, to my beautiful youth!'

Tears flashed into Mrs. Parmenter's eyes. 'Ah,' she thought, 'that's what liking people amounts to; it's liking their silliness and absurdities. That's what it really is.'

'And I,' she said aloud, 'will drink to the future; to our renewed friendship, and many dinners together. I like you two better than any one I know.'

When Albert came back from seeing Mrs. Parmenter down to her car, he found his uncle standing by the fire, his elbow on the mantel, thoughtfully rolling a cigarette. 'Albert,' he said in a deeply confidential tone, 'good wine, good music, beautiful women; that is all there is worth turning over the hand for.'

Albert began to laugh. The old man wasn't often banal. 'Why, Uncle, you and Martin Luther ——'

The Doctor lifted a hand imperiously to stop him, and flushed darkly. He evidently hadn't been aware that he was quoting — it came from the heart. 'Martin Luther,' he snapped, 'was a vulgarian of the first water; cabbage soup!' He paused a moment to light his cigarette. 'But don't fool yourself; one like her always knows when a man has had success with women!'

Albert poured a last glass from the bottle and sipped it critically. 'Well, you had success to-night, certainly. I could see that Marjorie was impressed. She's coming to take you for a ride to-morrow, after your nap, so you must be ready.'

The Doctor passed his flexible, nervous hand lightly over the thick bristles of his French hair-cut. '*Even in our ashes*,' he muttered haughtily.

BAILEY'S BEACH[1]

ESTHER FORBES

STILL loving life and loathing death, James Euclid Sloane abandoned a well-worn body capable of withstanding everything but time. And he left behind him his steel interests, his house on Madison Avenue, his residence at Newport, the villa in Florida, his yacht, his first editions, his queer Victorian 'art collection,' and many such inanimate things. And he left people behind, a widow, a brother, sons, grandsons, a daughter, granddaughters, and many others of his own blood. Twelve of these human beings went with him on his last ride from Madison Avenue to the church on Fifth, from the church to the Staten Island cemetery where he was to lie forever with generations of dead Sloanes.

A fall day, a chill October day. Sere leaves fell upon extravagant funeral wreaths. The wind trounced the rector's robes about his knees. 'In the midst of life we are in death.' How seemly, sad, expensive the black of the mourning men! How white-faced, aloof, the black-shrouded, mourning women! A beautiful day — blue and gold.

At a slightly faster rate of speed the twelve mourners

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returned to the dead man's house, sitting soberly together in the widow's drawing-room, waiting for the announcement of lunch — and after lunch the excitement of the will. Mr. Parkingham himself, of Dulles, Rollins, Parkingham, and Frost, was coming up with it after lunch. Plenty of money for everybody. The rector thought of that lady-chapel he had always hoped to build. Lady Hubbard, the pretty granddaughter, thought of the little house at Pau, where, if fortune favored her, she could live most of the year far from her husband, and do exactly as it pleased her. Her mother Edith, the dead man's only daughter, thought of money largely in terms of reforms, charities, and vast organizations. She was even thinking vaguely of Congress. Each of the potential heirs withdrew from those about them, other curiously distant people seated in the room all were lost in dreams and memories. The vast muffling silence of the drawing-room seemed to drown out the roar of traffic below the windows. Through the silence was the ticking of the clocks. The grandfather clock in the hall. The ormolu French clock upon the mantel. Gold watches in men's waistcoats, jeweled watches on women's wrists. This ticking wove together, making a thin rivulet of sound pulling away into eternity. It was the music of eternity, time, death.

The widow in her desolation sat alone. With dry and hooded eyes, she looked out upon the family gathered about her. She knew the rector was thinking of his lady-chapel even while he murmured to her little words of small comfort. She did not hear his voice. She heard the voice of her young husband; for long ago he had been young, and she had called him Gyp, and he had called her Jacky.

She had not thought of him by this, his private, secret name, for years, but during his last sickness he had cried out to her in a moment of bewilderment and despair, not as Jacqueline, but as Jacky. In his delirium it was not his wife of many years that he had needed, but Jacky, the child in her teens who had loved him with passion and who had married him in faith. Well, that poor little thing had not lasted long. The old woman closed her eyes to shut out the present. She did not see the rococo drawing-room. She saw sunlight in a Cambridge garden. Her father, the professor, upon the verandah, herself, Jacky, the tom-boy, romping with the Saint Bernard upon the lawn. She saw the girl look up. Gyp, whom she had just met the summer before, was coming towards her through the lilac bushes. Jacky was thrown into happy confusion. He was so wonderful, so handsome, rich, dashing — why, most wonderful of all, Aunt Myra disapproved. Aunt Myra had heard that he was 'fast.' More god than mortal was that slender, eager, luminous creature. If only he loved her as she loved him! But that soft light in his eyes! His eyes told her at that moment of meeting that he loved her, and that he would always love her forever and forever.

The rector's voice went on. He was speaking to her of her 'great loss.' Her 'great loss.' Mrs. J. E. Sloane's great loss. She glanced at the very spot where so recently a casket had rested. But Jacky's loss — that had come, it would seem a hundred years, a thousand years ago. A far-off era when the world was young and arcadian. Then there had been none of this ordered mourning, only the black of the night. No mourners but the crying gulls. 'I'll never forget them, those gulls wheeling and wheeling against the sunrise. But I haven't so much longer to remember, and when I die, who will remember, who will remember — Gyp, my Gyp.' How could one compare the ordered, unctuous, inevitable departure of death with that other horror, that confusion, that death of the soul? Looking back, she could smile a little patronizingly at the blazing, heart-broken girl she once had been. Well, Jacky, you got your deathblow then, my dear. Poor child, poor child! Yet why could not James have let her have that first year of marriage quite, quite to herself? She was so naïve, she could not appreciate the wealth, social prestige he lavished upon her. All she had wanted had been himself — and that was the one thing he was unable to give. Luckily Jacky died early, and a changeling had taken her place — and she, the old woman in black, she was the changeling. But James really had seen through all those successful, affectionate years they had had together. When he lay dying he had cried out for his lost girl, for Jacky, whom he himself had killed as surely as though he had strangled her with his hands.

That first summer at Newport. A cottage of her own, the wedding gift of those two handsome older brothers of Gyp's. A pair of young dappled mares, prettily named Fire-Bright and Star-Light. Such a smart carriage, basket work, rubber tires! And the most loving husband in the world, only she could never have enough of him. His soul's darling must be content with only the week-ends. He could not leave his business, and he would not let her lose her lovely complexion in a dirty New York summer. Then, too, he wanted her to know Newport. It was almost as much his home as New York. Later she learned that it was during that first summer that he and those famous cut-throat brothers of his had put through the first merger that had laid the foundations of the great business they were evolving. (And there was old Marcus, the last of the Sloane brothers, asleep on the top of his gold-headed cane.) How young Gyp could work! For eighteen hours a day this restless young fellow, who, when at home, could never sit ten minutes in the same chair, patiently sweated out his heart's blood. Yet when he arrived on Saturday morning he had the manner of a man who has thought of nothing but his sweetheart since the last parting. Of course the crucial state of the business was the real reason Gyp would not let her stay in New York that first summer. Her complexion, indeed! And those handsome, arrogant brothers of his — no wonder they had given her a cottage at Newport. Wanted to keep her out of James's way. They had been something alike, those three Sloanes — dark, slim, nervous in youth, ruthless and heavy in maturity, cautious, frosty, and a little dependent in old age. (And there was Marcus, the last of them... Joseph dead for fifteen years, and James ... why, James had been buried that morning... James ... my James... oh, what's the use of living now...)

The week-ends were heavenly, but the weeks themselves were hard enough. She was quite, quite alone, in spite of the endless calling, the croquet games, the drives, the little canters. She had time to wonder what it was these other women knew about her husband, for they all seemed to have known him well for years. Perhaps he had fancied he had loved some of these women before he had met and really loved herself. The stony dowagers sat and rocked all day. How cold, how cynical their eyes, how unlike dear Cambridge their scandalous and worldly conversation! And the young women — how wise, sharp, fashionable! She had never seen such small waists, such large bustles. As far as she could make out she was the only lady in Newport who brushed her own hair or wore a larger than four-A shoe. They made her feel like a country cousin, although they were so kind to her, complimenting her pink and childish beauty, telling her she was 'such a pretty girl — although you do come from Boston, my dear.' The weeks were lonely without Gyp.

On Monday morning when her husband left for New York, she always got up at five to drive with him to the wharf. She would stand gazing after his departing boat until it had dwindled off into nothing more than a plume of smoke upon the horizon, then turn and smile at old Corey, her coachman. She did not care if he saw tears in her eyes, for he was her friend, the only friend she had at Newport. He was a spidery old fellow with springy, bandy legs which made him look ridiculous when he jumped off the box and ran to the horses' heads. Now the old woman knew that he pitied the young girl who had married and passionately loved young Jimmie Sloane. He wished her well, but knew in the end it would not be well. He had been about Newport for years and his cynicism was even greater than the forbidding dowagers'. On the young bride, however, he lavished a dog-like, unquestioning devotion. (Old Corey ... what could have happened to you? Old Corey... I always had a feeling that you forgot yourself, upbraided your employer... now I will never know.)

One morning, as the boat docked, a woman but a few years older than the very young Mrs. Sloane walked down the gangplank followed by boxes and trunks and attended by two Negresses. Gyp was in the ticket-office. They recognized each other, but the woman went away quickly to the pony trap that waited her. She had a small, pale face, the cheeks already slightly hollowed by sickness, disappointment, or passion, a delicate, wilful mouth, and wild, troubled eyes. (With what cold, ironic interest the old woman summoned this sad and lovely wraith from the limbo of her memory! How firmly from out the past this strange, unhappy woman stepped forth at her command! Charming — very charming, the dowager pronounced judgment. But of course quite neurotic. They say she was shut up at the Williamsburg Asylum for years, died there — well! She was lonely, I suppose, and so was Jacky — that's why she appealed so strongly to the child.) Her clothes were not as fussy and uncomfortable-looking as the Newport belles'. She was dressed entirely in grey. Her tiny hat was of doves' wings. The dress tightly swathed the delicate, shapely body from the throat to halfway down the thighs. It was utterly untrimmed except (as the Parisian dressmaker and the lady herself had intended) by the vase-like curves of the body. In the back, however, was an infinity of plaits and bustles and ruffles. Their profusion and confusion further emphasized the simplicity of the dress as seen from the front.

She watched her husband stare after this lovely vision.

He hesitated, and followed her to her trap, shook her hand, exchanged a few words. 'Oh, my dearest Gyp,' Jacky cried when he returned to her, 'why didn't you introduce us? I like her the best of any one I've seen in Newport. She is so sweet and sad, like a lady in Tennyson's Idylls.' 'My poor little Baked Bean,' he answered affectionately, 'I'll never introduce her to you. Rather a bad name — you're too young to understand. Not the sort of woman one wishes one's wife associated with. In fact, child, that interesting object is the famous Belle Marie.' Jacky had heard much of this woman who was known, like a yacht, as 'The Belle Marie.' At mention of her men put on knowing, virile expressions, and even dumpy short dowagers managed to look tall and impressive. Jacky had visualized a coarse and showy creature. Instead, Belle Marie looked gentle, frightened, exquisite. Gyp explained that the women had ostracized her because of her beauty and her great charm for men more than because of her indiscretions. Women were small-minded, jealous creatures. 'Oh, but I am not like that,' promised Jacky. 'I love her more because of her beauty.' He kissed her mouth and said he believed her. It seemed that Belle Marie had a Virginian husband who could not leave his plantation during the hot season, but the lady's health could not endure the midsummer heat upon the James. Usually she went to Paris for a month or two, and then, armed with the most startling and beautiful clothes, descended upon Newport. The women would have none of her, and it was true she had let men call on her and stay too late. Her ball gowns were perhaps... a little low... and her heels a trifle high. These things had never affected *his* estimate — he had always found her sweet, warm-hearted, and gentle. 'But they would not affect mine either!' cried Jacky, stoutly allying herself with the noble male world against the icy dowagers she hated. He laughed and kissed her mouth again.

When she turned back from watching her husband's boat dying away into the west, she found Corey's eyes waiting for her. Something in their expression reminded her of the old women whom she so mistrusted. Disillusioned, worldly. 'I used to drive Mrs. Latour three summers ago,' he announced sadly. 'Mrs. who?' 'Mrs. Latour — the lady in the pony trap...' On the way home Corey made a slight détour, crossing the high lands that look down on Bailey's Beach. There was a bushy, neglected entrance. Corey pointed down the drive to a sagging old farmhouse, not a fashionable 'cottage' at all. 'She lives there.' 'Who?' 'Mrs. Latour.' (Oh, what a fool you were! Every one tried to warn you against that woman. Your husband, the ladies at Newport, Corey, even Mrs. Latour herself. Well, you knew best — young people always know best and it seems to me they always get hurt, one way or another. She glanced at her granddaughter, Lady Hubbard. What a wisp of a little thing, in a little wisp of black! — but she should not have those lines at the corners of her mouth, not at her age. And Gyp's eyes in the girl's lovely head, those wonderful, glowing eyes. Oh, yes... young people always get hurt... and old ones too. And Edith — there's Edith — almost an old woman now. I'm sure she has never done a thing she did not want to do — because she has never done anything that was not right... yet even her face looks sad in repose. I'm sure she enjoyed divorcing Phil... she has no conception of suffering, except in great droves — like ravished Armenia, or laboring men's wives...)

At last Jacky got what she wanted — she met The Belle Marie alone and found excuse to speak. Her idol walked upon a red cliff by a summer sea. She wore a green muslin frock and carried a lavender parasol, with which she pushed among the crevices of the rocks. She had lost something. 'What is it? Can I help you?' Mrs. Latour insisted, a little hastily, that it was nothing — a cheap filigree earring. She abruptly discontinued her search and made her graceful way over the rocks and across Bailey's Beach. There the bathers sat. They were women and children. They stared at the lovely creature in green and lavender, but they did not speak. Mrs. Latour took an upturning cart-path which led from the floor of the beach almost to her own gate.

Mrs. Latour's hands had been gloved in pale mauve. Jacky's were bare. Alone upon the cliff, she dug and pawed like a terrier until she found the earring. It was in the shape of a small pitcher. Then she hurried over the same route The Belle Marie had taken. All the bathers spoke to her. She excused herself, and in a few moments presented her dishevelment to the other woman's perfection.

Mrs. Latour sat alone in the cool of her old-fashioned parlor, sipping a mint julep. Under her own roof she seemed an utterly different creature from the cold woman of the cliffs. She was warm, eager, friendly. Mrs. Sloane must have a mint julep with her. Yes, it was a Southern drink, Mr. Latour's favorite. Her voice was as enchanting as her face and figure. But there were lines of sadness, almost of despair, about the roseleaf mouth, which touched with pity the heart of the young bride. Like a schoolgirl Jacky blurted out the real reason for her visit. She cried earnestly, 'I want to be your friend.' Mrs. Latour's lovely face suffused with delicate color. 'Oh, I would love that!' She eagerly took her guest to her own room as if she wished to introduce her to the innermost sanctum of her being. She showed her a miniature of her planter husband, whom she affectionately referred to as Johnny. Then Jacky spoke shyly of her husband, calling him by his sacred private name of Gyp. Mrs. Latour froze into ominous silence. She became, for a second, cold, hostile, aloof. She suggested that they sit upon her porch and watch the gulls.

In a few moments her coldness melted. When Jacky got up to go, Belle Marie clung to her with feverish insistence. She must come again. 'I need you so,' she said. 'Do promise me... you will come again.' 'But of course I will,' said the Cambridge child sturdily. 'You are positively the only person in Newport I can endure.'

(I am sure I can't imagine what I saw in the creature. Lonely, I suppose. And a young person coming to Newport for her first summer should have been so careful of early acquaintances. If I had not been so obviously just a silly child making a sad mistake, I might have been entirely dropped by The Right People. As she thought these wise thoughts, there was before her eyes, minute and distinct as if seen, not through time, but the wrong end of a telescope, the fragile, lovely Belle Marie — that bright little gamin called Jacky. She saw these two walk upon the sun-drenched beach. Now the waves roll in, blue and sparkling. Now the air is sweet with the life and the death of the sea. Oh, the sea! Where, where has your beauty gone? What has happened to Bailey's Beach? It never smells like that nowadays. Now it is a dull, lifeless place.... After all one place is much like another.)

Jacky gathered from the sly words of the other women that at one time her husband and The Belle Marie had been 'great friends, my dear.' If this were true, it seemed to her cruel that Gyp now so consistently refused to see her. He had told his wife that he had never been in love with Belle and Jacky had exclaimed in astonishment, 'Why, of course not!' (Actually — as naïve as that. Didn't know nice men, like her husband, sometimes fell in love with married women. Frenchmen did. Perhaps Italians — but not Americans like Gyp.)

One Friday her husband arrived a day early. Oh, the poor dear! He had walked up from the dock? He paused a moment. No. Mrs. Latour had given him a lift. He seemed anxious to dismiss the incident. The next morning when she met Belle, she was surprised to learn that Mrs. Latour had first driven him to her own house, Grey Gables. She had given him a mint julep. He had hung a picture for her. Also he had promised to come back Sunday to look over her spaniel for ticks. She dared not look herself. She was so afraid of ticks. Belle was frank about these plans. Gyp never mentioned them. He was more restless, preoccupied than ever. His eyes glowed with that curious golden light. He constantly fretted against his collar, like a restive horse. If his collar was uncomfortable, why didn't he put on a different one? For the first, but not the last time in her life, he looked at her quietly and did not answer. The look terrified her. She ran down to the stable. 'Corey, Corey, saddle Fire-Bright for me.' She rode alone, as she had been accustomed to ride in Cambridge. The gay young mare raced and played. When she came back she was happy again. Gyp had not heard what she had said about the collar. He had not intentionally slighted her.

Sunday afternoon Jacky timidly suggested that they both go over to Mrs. Latour's. Gyp would not. At five he jumped up, made an excuse about the post-office, and returned two hours later without explanation. By then the house was full of callers. He was casual, almost rude to them. Went about whistling, his long brown hands thrust deep into his pockets, his luminous eyes enigmatical, perhaps a little hostile both toward his wife and this fashionable group she had gathered around herself at his request.

The next morning, after he was gone, she played croquet with Belle. Jacky could not conceal her amazement when Belle candidly told her about her husband's call. She said she was sorry that Jacky had had such a bad headache she had been unable to come to Grey Gables Sunday afternoon. It was true that Jacky had complained of a headache early in the morning when the question of church had come up, but Gyp must have understood that that was only an excuse. This was why he had not told her where he was going. He had wanted to spare her the hot trip over. Love and trust welled up within her, and for Jacky (not for Jacqueline) love and trust were one thing. But the dowagers, throned in rocking-chairs upon their costly verandas, continued to regale her innocence with legends of seduction, adultery, betrayal. She hated their suspicions of a world which she had always found benevolent and honorable.

In July her mother asked her to come home for a few days. One of her brothers had typhoid and had set his heart on Jacky's return. She went for three days and stayed three weeks. Safe once more in the professor's garden, she forgot the cold eyes, the immaculate life of Newport, almost forgot that she was married. But she never forgot Gyp. He wrote her loving letters every day. And every day she read them all over again, beginning with the first one received. She would sit in the crotch of the early apple tree, weeping sometimes — because his words were so sweet, and because she loved him so. Eating sour little apples and throwing the cores over the fence into Professor Minchon's garden because he didn't like cores and she didn't like him.

On the first Sunday of August, she came back to Newport. She came unannounced, hoping like many another naïve lover pleasantly to surprise her sweetheart. It was a warm, sweet evening when she stepped out of the hired hack and rang her own bell. After a long wait, Blanche, a sinister, rude old woman who had begun life as a scullery maid in the household of her husband's father, crept to the door. Jacky did not like Blanche, who seemed to be some sort of sacred cow in the Sloane family. She had been absolutely forbidden ever to dismiss her. The young lady was not expected, the old woman said crossly. Mr. James had given the other servants a holiday. Only the old people — herself and Corey — were about. And where was Mr. James? Mr. James was away. Where did Blanche mean when she said 'away'? Well, she didn't know where she meant. The servant fetched her a lamp. Disappointed, and forebodingly sick at heart, the young girl climbed the stairs to that room she shared with her husband. The sight of his carelessly flung clothes scattered about the room moved her. There was the pillow where his head had rested. She flung herself upon the bed with a burst of passion (yes, passion. This smart, modern talk of Victorian women 'not feeling anything' was all nonsense). She buried her face in his pillow which still retained a slight fragrance of the tonic he used on his handsome head. Her fingers crept under the pillows. She hoped to find that he had lain with a letter of hers beside him as she had kept one of his. Her fingers touched a little ball of linen. Delighted, she drew it forth. She gazed and gazed. It was not her handkerchief. She owned nothing as sheer, as Parisian, as that. It smelled wistfully of heliotrope. It was Belle's. But of course he had thought it was hers... no, no... he had known it was Belle's. Well, then, he *did* know it was Belle's. He had liked the lovely scent. She herself would get some like it. She was breathless. Her heart was pounding and jerking, for it had recognized the true significance of the find before her brain.

The evil smell of the badly trimmed lamp drowned out the garden fragrance of heliotrope. It stifled her. Stiffly (for her knees as well as her heart knew the meaning of this handkerchief), she got to her feet, walked to the window. Outside, the night was lovely. A whip-poor-will bubbled in the long grass. But the trouble with that handkerchief... no, no, the trouble is with you. Newport has made you suspicious of every one. The trouble with that handkerchief is just this... it doesn't look as though it had been put away as a keepsake... it looks and feels, as though some one had cried into it for hours ... some one lay in this bed, and cried for hours.

She heard Corey's voice below speaking to Blanche. She crept to the head of the stairs, swallowed, cleared her throat, found she really could command her voice. 'Corey — good-evening. I came back suddenly — where is Mr. Sloane?' 'Good-evening, Mrs. Sloane. Out, I think — Mr. Sloane has gone out.' She heard the contemptuous scuff of Blanche's carpet slippers. There was a long pause. She heard her little coachman shift his weight, hawk nervously. 'Do you think,' Jacky continued, 'we'd be able to find him, if we harnessed up the pair?' 'Why, I am sure we could. Now I'll get the carriage right up.' She must not think. She must only trust Gyp. Trust him, trust him. All would be explained. Why, in an hour they would be together, laughing at her foolishness. But she must find him — wherever he was. She would scream out, go mad if she could not find him.

By the time she left the house, it was black night, and the moon not yet risen. She settled herself in the carriage. Corey was on the box. The gay grey horses pawed to go. 'Mrs. Sloane,' the man said, turning towards her, 'I think we might first drive over to your friend, Mrs. Latour's. You see, Mr. Sloane goes over now and then — to see if she has a new letter from you.' (Faithful Corey — trying your best to protect the young girl.) The soft vehicle rolled out of the drive with a small hiss of pebbles. (Rather like the tearing of silk, that old-fashioned sound of wheels upon the drive.) She would not admit, even to herself, her suspicions of Gyp. The handkerchief — pooh — that was nothing. But her racing heart knew. It was beating high up in her throat, fast as a rabbit's. You must trust him, said her brain, or what will become of love? Dear God, what will become of me? Dear God, what will become of me if...

The bushy entrance to Grey Gables was reached at a little past ten. The night was balmy, tropical, and below, upon the beach, the sea throbbed like a calm, well-controlled heart. Jacky bit her lips. Suddenly she could not bear to rush into another woman's house and demand her husband. 'Corey, we'll wait here... a moment. I'm sure he will not stay later than eleven.' Corey did not argue. Now he made no pretense of not knowing where Mr. Sloane was. Both knew. They waited and waited. An hour passed. An incredible moon, full and near, rose over the water and seemed to walk towards them, dragging silver skirts of light. This new magnificence dimmed the stars, made ridiculous the wan lamp glow in the cottage windows. Heavenly night... made for love... well, yes, made for passion. But the heart of the bride was stone.

Fire-Bright and Star-Light pawed the dirt, shook their silver-mounted trappings. Still the carriage waited. Still the girl sat rigid in the middle of the back seat. The coachman, correct and upright upon his box, still held his whip at the only correct angle. (No, no, I must be exaggerating. We could not have kept those ridiculous postures for two hours. Yet it was twelve o'clock when Corey scratched the match so I could look at my watch.) Once the girl thought she heard a door slam. She leaped from the phaeton. 'Corey, I think he is coming. I don't want him to know how long we have been here. It would worry him. He might think...' She waited impatiently by the shabby gates. No one came. No one ever came that night.

Her throat constricted until it was hard to swallow. What was happening? 'Oh, my darling Gyp! I *would* have died for you.' I would have died... why thus conditionally and in the past? Corey was gently urging her to get back into the carriage, suggesting that they drive up to Mrs. Latour's door, suggesting that they drive home. No, no, no. Not yet. Without a word she found the steep cart-path to the beach and stumbling as she ran made her way to the broad sands still warm from the heat of the sun. Now above her on its dune crouched Grey Gables. There was but one lamp still lit. That was in an upper chamber, and soon out. Then no light in all the world but moon and stars. No sound but the beating sea. No living being but that wild figure on the sand. She felt her soul floating out and out upon a nightmare sea of horror. She felt it struggle, drown. Now body and mind seemed to grow stiff, as though yet alive she suffered some *rigor mortis*... *Rigor mortis* of the soul.

What girl is this who runs upon the beach with streaming eyes and wild dishevelled hair? What proud, undisciplined spirit crying out its puny defiance to life and God and man? See the cold staring of the moon, the heartless beating of the sea — they are your answer. Peace, child, poor child — peace, and be still. 'In the midst of life we are in death.' Has the child no philosophy, no manners? Does she not know that men, even husbands, will be men? Even husbands or perhaps especially husbands? Seat yourself, order your hair! Hysterics! For shame! Why, nothing in the world hurts *that* much!

The young, mortally wounded creature flings herself on her face, grasping at the unstable sand to steady her in her anguish. Her body rocks with the convulsions of her weeping. Jacky, Jacky, will your defiance make a bad world good? A faithless man faithful? You fool, you utter fool! (To the ears of the widow seated in her drawing-room comes the sound of that choking cry — Oh, oh, oh-oh-oh... Gyp, Gyp... I loved you so... I *would* have died for you...) The girl jumps up. Her flounces are torn and hang about her feet. She gazes wildly at the moonlit water. What a wicked thought, and the little creature really has everything to live for — money, position. Girl, get to your carriage, your home, your bed. Cannot you see that laying such stress on the physical side of life — and love — is in a way un-Christian, undignified? It is nothing. The woman is only a passing toy for him — he will come back to you.

The moon is gone. The tide is full. Now a fresh breeze blows up off the sea, ruffling the damp hair and torn flounces of the prostrate girl. Her sobbing has stopped. She raises her head and sees with wonder how the night is gone, how to the east watery green marks the coming of the sun. Corey has driven the pair down the cart-path she took. The two grey horses stand in loosened harnesses. They must have seen her wake and stir, for their dark eyes are fixed upon her, their ears attentively pricked forward. Corey sits with his back toward her.

Inhuman, impersonal, unearthly shadow upon shadow and light upon light, the day begins. She hears the crying of the gulls as they float out over the glassy sea. Land birds chirp in the bushes about Grey Gables. Dispassionately she gets to her feet and finds to her surprise that some one has laid a carriage robe over her. It is a blow to her egoism to realize she has been asleep, so fast asleep Corey could come to her in the night and cover her from the cold. She thought she had cried all night. Now he notices that she is awake. He is up on his bandy legs, tightening the horses' harness. She goes to him. 'Good-morning, Corey.' That sounds quite as though nothing had happened. 'Good-morning, Mrs. Sloane.' 'Now I think we had better drive home,' said her lips. Her heart cried, Now I have no home — now I am alone, forever and ever. 'That's right, Mrs. Sloane.' Delicately he does not look straight at her. He speaks kind words of encouragement and praise to the horses — words he could not speak to his mistress. They are good girls, they are pretty patient girls, and soon they will be home. Jacky seats herself, starts to straighten her skirts. Why, they are in rags about her. It is a bright blue poplin, trimmed with plaid taffeta.

Her mother had given it to her, and the first time she had put it on was yesterday morning. She wanted something new and especially becoming to wear back to Gyp. See it now — draggled and ruined. As she gazed upon it, she remembered her mother's face, loving, sweet, intelligent. She wanted her mother, her father, all her younger brothers. She wanted security, peace, understanding, love. She covered her face with her hands and broke into a flood of light, childish tears. 'There's the good girl,' Corey was saying to Star-Light. But she must stand quietly until told to go. That's like me, thought Jacky. I must learn to stand quietly, quietly. The coachman came to her side. He was looking at her at last. And she looked at him. There was an expression of so much pity, understanding, and sorrow in his old and often cynical eyes that she stretched out her hand to him. 'There, there, don't you cry any more.' One night of it is enough for any man — or woman, either. 'Corey...' 'Yes, Mrs. Sloane?' 'Corey, people do get over things like this and...' 'Get over it? Yes, and better off afterwards, I sometimes think. Let me tell you just one thing. Now nothing will ever hurt you so much again. Even when he dies, it won't hurt like this. Sorrow is like smallpox. You get it once and then you never really get it hard again.' 'But you are pocked for life?' The old fellow looked away and answered mournfully, from some vast hidden store of worldly knowledge, 'Yes, Miss, I guess you're right.'

Pocked for life — yes, she had been pocked for life. Corey had been right — nothing, not even death, had hurt as much as that again. The surface of her being had been soft like the skin of a baby. Then it became hard, flinty, scar-pocked for life. Death of the soul, death of love. No, love lived on... a sort of love. Not the tumultuous passion she once had given. Love of a sort, friendship, liking. She even reached a stage where she felt no jealousy of his light loves. Of course, if he flaunted them, drove them about Central Park in a high cart, she had had to speak to him about it. She had been able to discuss such things with him calmly, even with a cynical humor which James (no longer Gyp) could relish. They had been worthy companions through maturity, through old age, up to the very gates of death. But once they had been lovers. That black night, the smell of the sea, the crying of the gulls, those dappled mares gazing at her just at sunrise, the torn dress, her mother's face — and old Corey's voice still echoing in her drawing-room, 'Now nothing will ever hurt you so much again.'

She found herself saying aloud to the rector, 'There is so much one wishes to say to those... who have gone. And questions that will never be answered.' 'Yes, indeed yes, Mrs. Sloane.' 'I have wondered for over half a century why Mr. Sloane sent away old Corey, just three days after... a very — ah — regrettable incident at Bailey's Beach. He was my coachman. He helped me — and then he was sent away. I never knew he was going — or why, or where. A new man suddenly appeared. And now I'll never know. It wasn't because he was too old. My husband insisted that I keep a certain parlor maid — the wicked, insolent old thing. We kept her for years after her mind began to go. I fancy she had some blackmail hold upon the family. She used to mumble as she worked, like this...' Mrs. Sloane made some incoherent and rather sinister noises in her throat which frightened every one in the room. They thought a stroke was coming on, that her mind was going. Edith, the Gibson Girl, rustled her black and flew to her mother's side. The rector made comforting sounds in his throat. The fair, frightened Catherine clasped her little Eustace even closer to her. Miss Marcia Sloane's shoulders hunched, her narrow, evil head dropped and began a curious sidewise swinging. Her father, old Marcus, last of the Sloane Brigands, woke up. 'How's that?' he asked. 'Not sick, is she — Jacqueline's not sick?' Young Bliss Hubbard's eyes left the clock. She stopped her harassed dreaming of her lover. She gazed at Gran. No, Gran was as well as ever. The girl was on her feet; with a sly, evasive turn of her perfect body she was out of the door. Her slender heels made no sound upon the heavy stair carpets. Again old Marcus's voice, 'How's that?' 'It's nothing,' said the widow, getting grandly to her feet, staring about her from the black tent of her mourning. 'While the rector talked, my thoughts went back to that first charming summer at dear Newport — and the first parlor maid we had. The creature lost her mind.' 'Mamma, how very distressing!' comforted Edith, still unable to forget the gruesome noise her mother had made. 'But... just don't think about such things...'

'Madame,' said the maid at the door, 'lunch is served.'

'Very well, Blanche.'

Glances were exchanged. Every one knew that the maid was called Olga. She had been with Mrs. Sloane for years. *Blanche!* They feared it was the beginning of the end. *Blanche!* What a funny mistake to make! She had been so self-controlled all through this terrible affair — no wonder she was breaking down a little now.

FAME FOR MR. BEATTY[1]

JAMES NORMAN HALL

WILLIAM C. Dow and Company, wholesale drygoods merchants, occupied a fourteen-story building covering half the block between Commercial and East River Streets. The business offices of the firm were on the fourth floor. Here were to be found the sales manager with his staff, the manager of imports with his, the advertising manager with his. The remainder of the fourth floor, considerably more than half of it, was taken up by the accounting department, a miniature city laid out in orderly, rectangular fashion, with narrow passageways for streets and wire cages for houses, each of them six feet by six, each of them with its occupant. In one of the cages farthest from the main corridor was a man who had been in the employ of the Dow Company for more than twenty years. His name was Herbert Beatty.

It would be difficult to describe Mr. Beatty in any vivid manner. To say that he was quietly dressed, that his linen was immaculate and his boots carefully polished, is not to distinguish him from thousands of other self-respecting bookkeepers. Observing him in a crowd — but this is un-

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thinkable: the most curious observer of human nature, touching elbows with him in a crowd, would not have noticed him, unless — which is equally unthinkable — Mr. Beatty had been guilty of some act of gross and unusual conduct, and even then the eccentricity would have been remembered rather than the man himself.

He was a lonely man, without close friends or any living relatives, so far as he knew, and his life flowed on from year to year in unbroken monotony. Although he spent forty-five hours weekly in his little wire enclosure, he neither spoke nor thought of it as a cage. He entered it, six mornings out of seven, as willingly as a bee enters its hive, and much more punctually. Having dusted off his boots with a flannel cloth which he kept in a drawer, he slipped into his black alpaca office-coat. Then he marked out with a neat cross, in red ink, the date of the previous day on the calendar — two crosses on a Monday. Then he opened the ledgers in which he took such pride, and was immediately engrossed in his work. This was purely of a routine nature, as familiar to him as breathing, quite as necessary, and almost as instinctively performed. He was rarely disturbed, had no decisions to make and was never asked for his opinion about anything.

At twelve-thirty he went out to lunch. He patronized always the same white-tiled restaurant on East River Street, a large, clean, impersonal sort of place catering to the employees of the wholesale houses in the vicinity. An immense sign on the wall of this restaurant read: 'We serve more than three thousand lunches daily, between the hours of twelve and two.' During the past ten years Mr. Beatty himself had alone been served with that number of lunches: three thousand lettuce sandwiches, three thousand pieces of custard pie, three thousand glasses of milk. But although his order was the same, summer and winter, none of the waitresses ever remembered what it was or appeared to recognize him as an old patron.

In winter he spent the whole of his luncheon hour in this place reading the 'Morning Post.' On fine days in summer, he would go, after his meal, to a small park near the City Hall, two blocks distant. There he would buy a bag of salted peanuts, and after eating a few of them would give the rest to the pigeons that frequented the square. They would eat out of his hand, perch on his outstretched arm, even on his head. He liked to think that they were his pigeons, and he enjoyed the moment of attention they brought him from other midday loungers in the park. When he had doled out the last of the peanuts, he dusted the salt from his fingers and sat down to enjoy his newspaper.

Mr. Beatty was one of the numberless army of men and women who have made possible the success of the modern American newspaper, whose reading is confined almost entirely to its columns. It amused him, instructed him, thought for him. He found there satisfaction for all his modest needs, spiritual and cultural. He turned first to the comic section, smiling over the adventures of Mutt and Jeff and the vicissitudes of the Gump family. These people were real to him, and he followed their fortunes closely from day to day. Next he read the editorial of Dr. Francis Crake whom he admired and respected as a philosopher of genius. Another feature of the 'Morning Post' was the 'Enquirer's' column. The enquirer sauntered daily through the streets, asking of four people chosen more or less at random, some question of current interest. Their replies, together with a small photograph of each individual, were then printed in the column. Mr. Beatty's interest never waned in this feature of his favorite newspaper. Indeed, there was so much on every page to engage his attention that his luncheon hour passed in a flash of time. At twenty minutes past one he would leave the park and before the half-hour had struck was again at his desk and at work.

One sultry midsummer day, while he was enjoying his usual noontime recreation in the park, a young man wearing horn-rimmed spectacles and with a camera slung over his shoulder, sat down on the bench beside him. Mr. Beatty was not aware of this at the moment, for he was in the midst of Dr. Crake's editorial for the day: 'Clothes as an Index of Personality.' In three short paragraphs Dr. Crake had evolved his philosophy on this subject. 'Show me a man who is slovenly in his dress and I will show you one that is slovenly in his morals. A clean collar is the index of a clean mind. It matters not how modest your income, or how humble your station in life, you cannot afford to be indifferent to the appearance you present to your fellow men. Neatness pays. It is investment at compound interest in the Bank of Success, and it will bring in dividends when you least expect them.' So Dr. Crake in his first paragraph. Mr. Beatty heartily approved of these opinions and he thought, not without a touch of pride, that Dr. Crake would have approved of him.

Upon turning the page of his paper he noticed his companion on the bench. The young man nodded cordially.

'A scorcher, isn't it?' he said.

Mr. Beatty was slightly startled. It was not often that a stranger spoke to him.

'Yes, it *is* warm,' he replied, a little apologetically, as though he were somehow to blame for the heat.

'Hottest day this summer,' said the young man. 'What do you suppose the thermometer at the "Morning Post" building registered at noon?'

'Oh, I couldn't say. I fancy it was pretty high?'

'One hundred and two in the shade; and it's hotter than that, inside. Press-room like a furnace, city-room worse. Glad I didn't have to stay there.'

'Are you — do you mean that you are employed on the "Morning Post"?'

'Yes. I run what we call the Enquirer's column. You may have read it sometimes?'

'Oh, yes! Well! Isn't that remarkable! Why, I always ——'

'Well, that's my job on the "Post," or one of them. I'm supposed to be working at it now. You know, that is really why I sat down on this bench. The question for to-morrow is, "Do you Favor Restricted Immigration?" When I saw you sitting here I thought, there's a man, if I'm not mistaken, who has views on this subject. Would you mind letting me have them, Mr. — but you haven't told me your name, I think.

'Beatty. Herbert Beatty.'

'Are you in business in the city?'

'Yes. I'm a bookkeeper with William C. Dow and Company.'

'That's fine! We'll be glad to have a man of your profession represented in the Enquirer's column. You don't object, do you, Mr. Beatty? You know, you can tell me precisely what you think our immigration policy should be. The "Post" wishes to offer its readers the opinions of intelligent men on both sides of the question.'

Never, not even in his most sanguine moments, had it occurred to Mr. Beatty that he might one day be called upon to express, publicly, his opinion of any question. Now that the opportunity had come, he was dazed, stupefied. The sound of the young man's voice came to him with a strange, far-off effect. He understood in a dream-like way that this reporter was preparing to direct the attention of a city of two million inhabitants to his, Herbert Beatty's, views upon a matter of great public concern. He watched, fascinated, while the young man drew a notebook from his pocket, slipped off the rubber band, opened it on his knee. What could he say? What *were* his views? Dr. Crake had dealt with this subject in one of his editorials only a few weeks before. If only he could remember what he had said, perhaps it would help him to ——

Of a sudden he was conscious that the young man was speaking.

'I suppose you think there is something to be said on both sides, Mr. Beatty?'

'Oh, yes! I — you see — you have taken me a little by surprise. One doesn't like to be too sure — I hardly know — perhaps ——'

'But wouldn't it, in your opinion, be a good thing if the Government were to adopt a fairly cautious restriction policy, say for the next twenty-five years?'

'Well, yes, I believe it would.'

'We would know by that time where we stand, don't you think, with respect to the great foreign-born population already in America? With this information to guide us, we could then decide what our future policy should be.'

Mr. Beatty heartily agreed with this. It seemed to him a sound way of looking at the matter. The reporter made some rapid entries in his notebook, snapped on the rubber band, and clipped his pencil to his waistcoat pocket.

'Thanks very much, Mr. Beatty. You're the fourth man I've interviewed to-day. The views of the other three were rather extreme, both for and against restricted immigration. I'm glad to have found one man who favors moderation — a wise middle course. Now, then, you'll let me take your photograph? We like to print these with the replies in the column. I'll not be ten seconds. If you'll stand there — a little more this way —— Good! That will do. Snap! That's done it! Thanks once more, Mr. Beatty. To-morrow the whole city will know your views on the immigration problems, and I'll venture to say that nine out of ten men will agree with them. Well, good-bye, I must be getting along.'

Mr. Beatty was conscious of a feeling of profound relief as he entered his enclosure at the bookkeeping department. He rearranged the articles on his desk, flicked an imaginary fleck of dust from his adding-machine, and resharpened a pencil whose point had been a little blunted with use during the morning. So great was the virtue in these familiar practices, and so strong the habits of a lifetime, that he was then able to resume his work with a certain measure of calm.

But his pleasantly disquieting thoughts returned at five o'clock. They seemed to be awaiting him in the street below, and occupied his mind to the exclusion of everything else. He entered the stream of homeward-bound pedestrian traffic, letting it carry him where it would, and presently found himself in front of the 'Morning Post' building. One of the plate-glass windows bore an inscription in gold lettering: 'The Morning Post. Your Paper — Everybody's Paper. Guaranteed Circulation Over 450,000.' He gazed at this for some time as he thought over the events of the day. He could recall vividly the appearance of the young reporter, and the kind of notebook he had used — opening at the end, with wide spaces between the ruled lines — and the round blue pencil with the nickel pocket-clip. But he could not remember at all clearly the details of the interview. How long had it lasted? Five minutes? Ten minutes? Probably not more than five. The reporter had worked rapidly.... He had seemed pleased with his replies.... But just what was it he had said? ... A circulation of four hundred and fifty thousand! And likely twice that many people actually read the 'Post.'

After his customary solitary supper, Mr. Beatty went to a moving-picture theater for the seven-o'clock show. He returned to his lodgings at nine and went to bed. The following morning he awoke at a quarter to five, an hour before his usual time. It was impossible to sleep again, so he shaved, dressed, and went downstairs. The sky was cloudless; it would be another sweltering day. A horse-drawn milk wagon was just then making its rounds; otherwise the street was deserted.

The stationery shop where he usually bought his morning paper was not yet opened. He went on to another several blocks distant, but that, too, was closed. The papers had already been delivered there; they were lying on the doorstep, loosely wrapped in a brown paper cover. Mr. Beatty looked up and down the street; there was no one in view. Quickly opening his penknife he cut the cord of the parcel and drew forth a copy of the 'Post.' Then he discovered that he had only a penny, a quarter, and a half-dollar in his pocket, and the price of the 'Post' was three cents. He left the quarter on top of the parcel and hurried back to his lodgings where Mrs. Halleck, his landlady, was standing in the entryway.

'Good-morning, Mr. Beatty! Well! You *are* an early bird this morning! Wherever have you been at this time of day? My! Ain't this heat awful? I don't know what's goin' to happen if we don't have some rain soon to cool things off. You got the morning paper already?'

He murmured a hasty reply, went up to his room on the third floor, and shut and locked the door. Then he opened his paper at the editorial page.

ENQUIRER'S COLUMN

Question for the day: 'Do you favor Restricted Immigration?' Herbert Beatty, bookkeeper, with William C. Dow & Company, 400 Commercial Street.

'One hesitates in pronouncing an opinion upon a question of such far-reaching importance, but it would seem advisable that we should now adopt a cautious, well-balanced policy of restriction until such time as we shall have been able to assimilate the immense foreign-born population already on our shores. Twenty-five years hence we shall have gathered sufficient data with regard to our immigration policy to enable us to decide with some measure of confidence what our future policy should be.'

Mr. Beatty's photograph gazing at him from the page and the print of his own name looked so strange that he could hardly believe them his. He read the interview again, and a third and a fourth time. He had not been able to recall, before, just how he had worded his reply; he had been a little confused, of course, at the moment of the interview, and surprised at the suddenness of the question put to him by the reporter. What a faculty that young man had shown for getting immediately at the gist of his thought! That was a reporter's business, to be sure, but this one must be a particularly gifted interviewer. His own interview had been given the place of honor at the top of the column. He now turned to the views of the others:

Morris Goldberg, haberdasher, 783 Fourth Avenue.

'I don't think we've got room for any more foreigners in the United States. We ought to put the lid on tight, now. Business has been poor since the war, and there's too much competition already.'

H. Dwight Crabtree, pastor, the Division Street Baptist Church.

'I often think of America as a great melting-pot where all the various splendid elements which go to make up our Democracy are being fused, and the composite type, American, made perfect in the sight of the Father of us all. No, let us not forbid them, these brothers of ours from over the seas. Let us rather say: "Welcome, ye poor and oppressed! We have room for you and more than room! Bask here in God's sunlight! Enjoy our opportunities! Partake of our fellowship! And may you bequeath to your children a rich heritage of health and love and beauty in this glorious land, America!"'

John J. Canning, architect, 45 First National Bank Building.

'This question would have been timely fifty years ago. My answer then would have been: "I favor exclusion, not restriction." That is my answer to-day.'

Over his breakfast at the dairy lunch-room at the corner, Mr. Beatty again read the interviews, gaining the conviction as he compared them, that his was by far the most sensible of the four. It was pleasant to think of the thousands of men who would that day read his opinions, learn of his name — college professors, lawyers, doctors, government officials, perhaps Dr. Crake himself. He remembered now that Dr. Crake, too, had counseled moderation in dealing with the question of restricted immigration. He would be pleased to see his views upheld in the Enquirer's column. He could fancy him saying, 'Now *there's* a man that knows what he is talking about.'

The walk to the office on this memorable August morning was like a dream to him. Every newsboy at every corner seemed particularly anxious to sell him papers, and every passer-by seemed to look at him with interest, with respect. He fancied several times that he had been recognized. He was almost afraid to enter the Dow building, and gave a sigh of relief when he was safe within his enclosure at the end of the corridor. He found it difficult to keep his mind on his work. The roar of traffic from the street was like a universal voice of acclaim loud with the name, Beatty — so loud, in fact, that he did not at first hear the voice of a small boy standing at the little window in front of his desk.

'Mr. Beatty! Mr. Dow wants to see you, Mr. Beatty.'

He looked up quickly.

'Who did you say?'

'Mr. William Dow wants to see you. He says you are to come up at once if you are not too busy.'

Arriving at the fourth floor, the boy who had escorted him pointed to a glazed door at the end of a passageway.

'Mr. Dow is in there,' he said, and left him.

Mr. Beatty hesitated for a moment, then timidly approached the door and knocked, very gently. Receiving no reply, he knocked again, a trifle more firmly.

'Come in!'

Mr. Dow was busy with his morning correspondence. He finished the dictation of a letter before looking up.

'Good-morning,' he said. 'Yes?'

'I beg your pardon, sir. I was told that you wished to see me.'

'Oh, yes. Are you Mr. Beatty? I've just been reading your little interview in the "Post." It was yours, I believe?'

'Yes, sir. That is ——'

'I rather liked your reply to that question, Mr. Beatty. I merely wanted to tell you this. But just what do you mean by "a cautious, well-balanced policy of restriction"? How would you put it into effect, supposing you had the power?'

'Oh, I should hardly like to say, sir. I haven't thought so very much —— Perhaps ——'

'How would you begin? What nationalities do you think should first be restricted? Poles? Italians? Russian Jews?'

'Well, yes, perhaps the Russians — but I can't say that I am quite sure ——'

Mr. Dow gave him a thoughtful, appraising glance.

'How long have you been with us, Mr. Beatty?'

'Twenty years, sir, the fourteenth of last April.'

His employer pursed his lips in a soundless whistle.

'Have you! As long as that? What do you think of our Accounting Department? Is it efficiently managed?'

'Why, yes, I believe so, sir. At least — that is, I am sure that you know much better than I do.'

'Have you any suggestions to make as to how it might be bettered?'

'Oh, no, sir!'

Mr. Dow gazed silently out of the window for a moment.

'Well, I'm glad to have had this opportunity for a little chat with you, Mr. Beatty. That's all for the present. Thanks for coming up.'

On a November afternoon, several years later, Mr. Beatty, having fed his pigeons in City Hall Park, dusted the salt from his fingers with his handkerchief, and sat down to his customary after-luncheon perusal of the 'Morning Post.' It was a raw, blustery day, too chilly for comfort out-of-doors. He decided that hereafter he would spend his luncheon hour at the restaurant. But this was not to be. The following day he came down with an attack of bronchial pneumonia. Within a week he was dead.

Mrs. Halleck, his landlady, was genuinely sorry to lose so old and dependable a lodger, but she could not afford to let sentimental regrets interfere with reletting at once her third-floor-front, one of the best rooms in the house. Her new lodger, a law-school student, moved in immediately. She had the room all ready for him, but had forgotten to remove from the wall a bit of cardboard which hung by a string by the side of the bed. A newspaper clipping, yellow with age, was pasted on it. The young man glanced idly at it as he took it down. 'One hesitates,' he read, 'in pronouncing an opinion on a question of such far-reaching importance, but it would seem advisable that we should now adopt ——'

Whistling softly to himself, the new lodger arranged his belongings. He crumbled the piece of cardboard and threw it in the waste-paper basket. He hung a Maxfield Parrish picture in its place. The light was just right for it there.

MISS HINCH[1]

HENRY SYDNOR HARRISON

IN GOING from a given point on One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Street to a subway station at One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth, it is not usual to begin by circling the block to One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Street, especially in sleet, darkness, and deadly cold. When two people pursue such a course at the same time, moving unobtrusively on opposite sides of the street, in the nature of things the coincidence is likely to attract the attention of one or the other of them.

In the bright light of the entrance to the tube they came almost face to face, and the clergyman took a good look at her. Certainly she was a decent-looking old body, if any woman was: white-haired, wrinkled, spectacled, and stooped. A poor but thoroughly respectable domestic servant of the better class she looked, in her black hat, neat veil, and nondescript gray cloak; and her brief glance at the reverend gentleman was precisely what it should have been from her to him — deference itself. Nevertheless, he, going more slowly down the draughty steps, continued to study her from behind with a singular intentness.

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An express was just thundering in, which the clergyman, handicapped as he was by his clubfoot and stout cane, was barely in time to catch. He entered the same car with the woman, and took a seat directly across from her. It must have been then well past midnight, and the wildness of the weather was discouraging to travel. The car was almost deserted. Even here under the earth the bitter breath of the night blew and bit, and the old woman shivered under her cloak. At last, her teeth chattering, she got up in an apologetic sort of way, and moved toward the rear of the car, feeling the empty seats as she went, in a palpable search for hot pipes. The clergyman's eyes followed her; he watched her sink down, presently, into a seat on his own side of the car. A young couple sat between them now; he could no longer see the woman, beyond glimpses of her black knees and her faded bonnet, fastened on with a long steel hatpin.

Nothing could have seemed more natural or more trivial than this change of seats on the part of a thin-blooded and half-frozen passenger. But it happened to be a time of mutual doubts and general suspiciousness, when men looked askance into every strange face, and the smallest incidents might take on an hysterical importance. Through days of intense searching for a fugitive outlaw of extraordinary gifts, the nerves of the city had been visibly strained. All jumped now when anybody cried 'Boo!' and the hue and cry went up falsely twenty times a day.

The clergyman pondered; mechanically he turned up his coat-collar and fell to stamping his feet. He was an Episcopal clergyman, by his garb — rather short, very full-bodied, not to say fat, bearded, and somewhat puffy-faced, with heavy cheeks cut by deep creases. Well lined against the cold though he was, however, he, too, began to show signs of suffering, and presently rose and moved in his turn, seeking out a new place where the chilled heating apparatus might give a better account of itself. He found a seat just beyond the old serving-woman, limped into it, and relapsed into his own thoughts.

The young couple, half a dozen seats away, appeared thoroughly absorbed in each other's society. The fifth traveler, a withered old gentleman sitting across and down the aisle, napped fitfully upon his cane. The woman in the shapeless cloak sat in a sad kind of silence; and the train hurled itself roaringly through the tube. After a time, she glanced through her spectacles at the meditating clergyman, and her look fell swiftly from his face to the 'ten-o'clock extra' in his hand. She removed her gaze and let it travel casually about the car; but before long it returned again, as if magnetized, to the newspaper. Then, with some obvious hesitation, she bent forward and said, above the noises of the train:

'Excuse me, Father, but would you please let me look at your paper a minute, sir?'

The clergyman came out of his reverie instantly, and looked at her with a quick smile.

'Certainly. Keep it, if you like: I am quite through with it. But,' he said, in a pleasant deep voice, 'I am an Episcopal minister, not a priest.'

'Oh, sir — I beg your pardon! I thought ——'

He dismissed the apology with a nod and a good-natured hand.

The woman opened the paper with decent cotton-gloved fingers. The garish headlines told all the story: 'Earth Opened and Swallowed Miss Hinch, Says Inspector — Police Confess "Practically No Clue" — Even Jessie Dark' — so the bold capitals ran on — 'Seems "Stumped."' Below the spread was a luridly written but flimsy narrative, 'By Jessie Dark,' which at once confirmed the odd implications of the caption. 'Jessie Dark,' it appeared, was one of those most extraordinary of the products of yellow journalism, a woman 'crime expert,' now in action. More than this, she was a 'crime expert' to be taken seriously, it seemed — no mere office-desk sleuth, but an actual performer with, unexpectedly enough, a somewhat formidable list of notches on her gun. So much, at least, was to be gathered from her paper's boxed display of 'Jessie Dark's Triumphs':

March 2, 1901. Caught Julia Victorian, *alias* Gregory, the brains of the 'Healy Ring' kidnappers.

October 7–29, 1903. Found Mrs. Trotwood and secured the letter that convicted her of the murder of her lover, Ellis E. Swan.

December 17, 1903. Ran down Charles Bartsch in a Newark laundry and trapped a confession from him.

July 4, 1904. Caught Hélène Gray, 'Blackmail Queen,' and recovered the Stratford jewels.

And so on — nine 'triumphs' in all; and nearly every one of them, as the least observant reader could hardly fail to notice, involved the capture of a woman.

Nevertheless, it could not be pretended that the 'snappy' paragraphs in this evening's extra seemed to foreshadow a new or tenth triumph for Jessie Dark at an early date; and the old serving-woman in the car presently laid down the sheet with a look of marked depression.

The clergyman glanced at her again. Her expression was so speaking that it seemed almost an invitation; moreover, public interest in the curious case had created a freemasonry which made conversation between total strangers the rule wherever two or three were gathered.

'You were reading about this strange mystery, I suppose?'

The woman with a sharp intake of breath, answered: 'Yes, sir. Oh, sir, it seems as if I couldn't think of anything else.'

'Ah?' he said calmly. 'It certainly appears to be a remarkable affair.'

Remarkable, indeed, the affair seemed. In a tiny little room within ten steps of Broadway, at half-past nine o'clock on a fine evening, Miss Hinch had killed John Catherwood with the light sword she used in her famous representation of the Father of his Country. Catherwood, it was known, had come to tell her of his approaching marriage; and ten thousand amateur detectives, stimulated by the unprecedented 'rewards,' had required no further motive of a creature already notorious for fierce jealousy. So far the tragedy was commonplace enough, and even vulgar. What had redeemed it to romance from this point on was the extraordinary faculty of the woman, which had made her celebrated while she was still in her teens. Violent, unmoral, criminal she might be, but she happened also to be the most astonishing impersonator of her time. Her brilliant act consisted of a series of character changes, many of them done 'in full view of the audience' with the assistance only of a small table of properties half concealed under a net. Some of these transformations were so amazing as to be beyond belief, even after one had sat and watched them. Not the woman's appearance only, but voice, speech, manner, carriage, all shifted incredibly to fit the new part; so that she appeared to have no permanent form or fashion of her own, but to be only so much plastic human material out of which her cunning could mould at will man, woman, or child, great lady of the Louisan court, or Tammany chieftain with the modernest of East Side modernisms upon his lips.

With this strange gift, hitherto used only to enthrall audiences and wring extortionate contracts from managers, the woman known as Miss Hinch — she appeared to be without a first name — was now fighting for her life somewhere against the police of the whole world. Without artifice, she was a tall, thin-chested young woman with strongly marked features and considerable beauty of a bold sort. What she would look like at the present moment nobody could venture a guess. Having stabbed John Catherwood in her dressing-room at the Colisseum, she had donned hat and coat, dropped two wigs and her make-up kit into a handbag, and walked out into Broadway. Within ten minutes the dead body of Catherwood was found and the chase begun. At the stage door, as she passed out, Miss Hinch had met an acquaintance, a young comedian named Dargis, and exchanged a word of greeting with him. That had been ten days ago. After Dargis, no one had seen her. The earth, indeed, seemed to have opened and swallowed her. Yet her natural features were almost as well known as a President's, and the newspapers of a continent were daily reprinting them in a hundred variations.

'A very remarkable case,' repeated the clergyman, rather absently; and his neighbor, the old woman, agreed mournfully that it was. Then, as the train slowed and quieted for the stop at Eighty-Sixth Street, she spoke again, with sudden bitterness:

'Oh, they'll never catch her, sir — never! She's too smart for 'em all, Miss Hinch is.'

Attracted by her tone, the stout divine inquired if she was particularly interested in the case.

'Yes, sir — I got reason to be. Jack Catherwood's mother and me was at school together, and great friends all our life long. Oh, sir,' she went on, as if in answer to his look of faint surprise, 'Jack was a fine gentleman, with manners and looks and all beyond his people. But he never grew away from his old mother — no, sir, never! And I don't believe ever a Sunday passed that he didn't go up and set the afternoon away with her, talking and laughing just like he was a little boy again. Maybe he done things he hadn't ought, as high-spirited lads will, but oh, sir, he was a good boy in his heart — a good boy. And it does seem too hard for him to die like that — and that hussy free to go her way, ruinin' and killin' ——'

'My good woman,' said the clergyman presently, after glancing about, 'compose yourself. No matter how diabolical this woman's skill is, her sin will assuredly find her out.'

The woman dutifully lowered her handkerchief and tried to compose herself, as bidden.

'But oh, she's that clever — diabolical, just as ye say, sir. Through poor Jack we of course heard much gossip about her, and they do say that her best tricks was not done on the stage at all. They say, sir, that, sittin' around a table with her friends, she could begin and twist her face so strange and terrible that they would beg her to stop, and jump up and run from the table — frightened out of their lives, sir, grown-up people, by the terrible faces she could make. And let her only step behind her screen for a minute — for she kept her secrets well, Miss Hinch did — and she'd come walking out to you, and you could go right up to her in the full light and take her hand, and still you couldn't make yourself believe that it was her.'

'Yes,' said the clergyman, 'I have heard that she is remarkably clever — though, as a stranger in this part of the world, I, of course, never saw her. I must say, it is all very interesting and strange.'

The express had started again with a jolt, and the rumbling and roaring all but drowned out his voice. He turned his head and stared through the window at the dark flying walls. At the same moment the woman turned her head and stared full at him. When he turned back, her gaze had gone off toward the door.

The clergyman picked up the paper thoughtfully and read for a while. But when, just outside of Grand Central station, the train came to a nameless halt, he at once resumed the conversation.

'I'm a visitor in the city, from Denver, Colorado,' he explained in an easy way, 'and knew little or nothing about the case until an evening or two ago, when I attended a meeting of gentlemen here. The Men's Club at Saint Matthias's Church — perhaps you know the place? Upon my word, they talked of nothing else. I confess they got me quite interested in their gossip. So to-night I bought this paper to see what this extraordinary woman detective it employs had to say about it. We don't have such things in the West, you know. But I must say I was disappointed, after all the talk about her.'

'Yes, sir, indeed, and no wonder, for she's told Mrs. Catherwood herself that she's never made such a failure as this, so far. It seemed like she could always catch women, up to this. It seemed like she knew in her own mind just what a woman would do, where she'd try to hide, and all, and so she could find them time and time again when the men detectives didn't know where to look. But oh, sir, she's never had to hunt for such a woman as Miss Hinch before!'

'No? I suppose not,' said the clergyman. 'Her theorizing here certainly seems very sketchy.'

'*Theorizing*, sir! Bless my soul!' suddenly exploded the old gentleman across the aisle, to the surprise of both. 'You don't suppose the clever little woman is going to show her hand in those newspaper stories, with Miss Hinch in the city and reading every line of them! In the city, sir — such is my positive conviction!'

He had roused from his nap, it seemed, just in time to overhear the episcopate criticism. Now he answered the looks of the old woman and the clergyman with an elderly cackle.

'Excuse my intrusion, I'm sure! But I can't sit silent and hear anybody run down Jessie Dark — Miss Matthewson in private life, as perhaps you don't know. No, sir! Why, there's a man at my boarding-place — remarkable fellow named Hardy, Tom Hardy — who's known her for *years!* As to those *theorizings*, sir, I can assure you she puts in there *exactly the opposite of what she really thinks!*'

'You don't tell me!' said the clergyman.

'Yes, sir! Oh, she plays the game! She has her private ideas, her clues, her schemes. The woman doesn't live who is clever enough to hoodwink Jessie Dark. I look for developments any day, sir!'

A new voice joined in. The pair down the car, their attention caught by the old man's pervasive tones, had been frankly listening: and it was illustrative of the public mind at the moment that, as they now rose for the station, the young fellow felt perfectly free to offer his contribution.

'Dramatic situation, isn't it, when you stop to think? Those two clever women pitted against each other in a life-and-death struggle — fighting it out in the underground somewhere — keen professional pride on one side and fear of the electric chair on the other ——'

'Oh, yes! Oh, yes!' exclaimed the old gentleman, rather testily. 'But, my dear sir, it's not professional pride that makes Jessie Dark so resolute to win. It's *sex jealousy* — if you follow me — no offense, madam! Yes, sir! Women never have the slightest respect for each other's abilities — not the slightest. No mercy for each other, either! I tell you, Jessie Dark would be ashamed to be beaten by another woman. Read her stories between the lines, sir — invincible determination — no mercy! You catch my point?'

'It sounds reasonable,' answered the Colorado clergyman, with his quick smile. 'Women, we are told ——'

'Oh, I'm for Jessie Dark, all right!' the young fellow broke in — 'especially since the police have practically laid down. But ——'

'Why, she's told my friend Hardy,' the old gentleman rode him down, 'that she'll find Hinch if it takes her lifetime! Knows a thing or two about actresses, she says. Says the world isn't big enough for the creature to hide from her. Well! What do you think of that?'

'Tell what we were just talking about, George,' prompted the young wife with an admiring gaze.

'But oh, sir,' began the old woman timidly, 'Jack Catherwood's been dead ten days now, and ——'

'Woman got on my car at nine o'clock to-night,' suddenly shouted the guard, who, having flung open the doors, was listening to the symposium eagerly — 'wore a brown veil and goggles. I'd 'a' bet every dollar I had——'

'Ten days, madam! And what is that, pray?' barked the old gentleman, rising abruptly but triumphantly. 'A lifetime, if necessary! — never fear! Mrs. Victorian was considered pretty clever, eh? Wasn't she? Remember what Jessie Dark did for her? Nan Parmalee, too — though the police did their best to steal her credit. She'll do just as much for Miss Hinch — you may take it from me!'

'But how's she going to make the capture, gentlemen?' cried the young fellow, getting his chance at last. 'That's the point my wife and I've been discussing. Suppose she succeeds in spotting this woman-devil, what'll she do? Now——'

'Do, sir! Yell for the police! I say ——'

'And have Miss Hinch kill her — and then herself, too? Wouldn't she have to ——'

'Grand Central!' cried the guard for the second time; and the young fellow broke off reluctantly as his bride towed him strongly toward the door.

'Hope she nabs her soon,' he called back to the clergyman over his shoulder — 'getting on my nerves! One of these kindergarten reward-chasers followed my wife five blocks, just because she's got a pointed chin. Don't know what might have happened if I hadn't come along and ——'

Doors rolled shut behind him, and the train flung itself on its way. Within the car, a silence ensued. The clergyman stared at the floor, and the old woman fell back upon the borrowed 'extra.' She appeared to be re-reading the observations of Jessie Dark with considerable care. Presently she lowered the paper and began a quiet search for something under the folds of her cloak; and at length, her hands emerging empty, she broke the silence, in a lifted voice:

'Oh, sir — have you a pencil you could lend me, please? I'd like to mark something in the piece to send to Mrs. Catherwood. It's what she says here about their hide-outs, as she terms them.'

The obliging divine felt in his pockets, and, after a good deal of hunting, produced a pencil — a white one, with thick blue lead. She thanked him gratefully.

'How is Mrs. Catherwood bearing all this strain and anxiety?' he asked suddenly, in the loud, empty car. 'Have you seen her to-day?'

'Oh, yes, sir. I've been spending the evening with her since nine o'clock, and am just back from there now. Oh, she's dreadful broke up, sir.'

She glanced at him with an uncertain air. He stared straight in front of him, saying nothing, though conceivably he had learned, in common with the rest of the world, that Jack Catherwood's mother lived, not on One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Street, but on West Eighth Street. Possibly his silence had been an error of judgment? Perhaps that misstatement of hers had not been a slip, but something cleverer?

The woman went on, rather easily: 'Oh, sir, I only hope and pray those gentlemen may be right, but it does look to

Mrs. Catherwood, and me too, that if Jessie Dark was going to catch her at all, she'd have done it before now. Look at those big, bold, blue eyes she had, sir, with lashes an inch long, they say, and that terrible long chin of hers. They do say she can change the color of her eyes, not forever, of course, but put a few of her drops into them and make them look entirely different for a time. But that chin, ye'd say ——'

She broke off; for the clergyman, without preliminaries of any sort, had picked up his heavy stick and suddenly risen.

'Why! — here we are at Fourteenth Street!' he said, quite astonished. 'I must change here — well, well! You go farther, perhaps? Good-night! Success to Jessie Dark, I say.'

He was watching the woman's sad, faded face, and he saw break into it a look of quick surprise which, it may be, was just what he had expected.

'Fourteenth Street, sir! I'd no notion at all — for I've paid no notice to the stops. It's where I change too, sir, the expresses not stopping at my station.'

'Ah?' said the clergyman, smiling a little.

He led the way, limping and leaning on his stick. They emerged upon the chill and cheerless platform, not exactly together, yet still with some reference to their acquaintanceship on the car. But the clergyman, after stumping along a few steps, all at once realized that he was walking alone, and turned. The woman had halted. Over the intervening space their eyes met.

'Come,' said the man gently. 'Come, let us walk about a little to keep warm.'

'Oh, sir — it's too kind of you,' said the woman, slowly coming forward.

From other cars two or three chilled travelers had got off to make the change; one or two more came straggling in from the street; but, scattered over the bleak, narrow expanse, they detracted little from the isolation that seemed to surround the woman and the clergyman. Step for step, the odd pair made their way to the extreme northern end of the platform.

'By the way,' said the clergyman, halting abruptly, 'may I see that paper again for a moment?'

'Oh, yes, sir — of course,' said the woman, producing it from under her cloak. 'I thought you had finished with it, and I ——'

He said that he wanted only to glance at it for a moment; but he fell to looking through it page by page, with rather a searching scrutiny. The woman glanced at him several times. At last she said hesitatingly:

'I thought, sir, I'd ask the ticket-chopper could he say how long before the next train. I'm very late as it is, sir, and I still must stop to get something to eat before I go to bed.'

'An excellent idea,' said the clergyman, putting the newspaper in his pocket. Side by side, they retraced their steps down the platform, questioned the chopper with scant results, and then, as by tacit consent, started slowly back again. However, before they had gone very far, the woman all at once stopped short and, with a drawn face, leaned against a pillar.

'Oh, sir, I'm afraid I'll just have to stop and get a bite somewhere before I go on. You'll think me foolish, sir, but I missed my supper entirely to-night, and there is quite a faint feeling coming over me.'

The clergyman eyed her with apparent concern. He said: 'Do you know, your mentioning something to eat a moment ago reminded me that I myself am all but famishing.' He glanced at his watch, appearing to deliberate. 'Yes — it will not take long. Come, we will find some modest eating-place together.'

'Oh, sir,' she stammered, 'but — you wouldn't want to eat with a poor old woman like me, sir.'

'Why not? Are we not all equal in the sight of God?'

They ascended the stairs together, like any prosperous parson and his poor parishioner, and, coming out into Fourteenth Street, started west. On the first block they came to a little restaurant, a brilliantly lighted, tiled and polished place of the quick-lunch sort, well filled with late patrons. But the woman timidly preferred not to stop here, saying that the glare of such places was very bad for her old eyes. The divine accepted the objection, without comment. A block farther on they found on a corner a quieter resort, an old-fashioned establishment which boasted a 'Ladies' Entrance' down the side street.

They entered, and sat down at a table, facing each other. The woman read the menu through, and finally, after some embarrassed uncertainty, ordered poached eggs on toast. The clergyman ordered the same. The simple meal was soon served. Just as they were finishing it, the woman said apologetically:

'If you'll excuse me, sir — could I see the bill of fare a minute? I think I'd best take a little pot of tea to warm me up, if they do not charge too high.'

'I haven't the bill of fare,' said the clergyman.

They looked diligently for the cardboard strip, but it was nowhere to be seen. The waiter drew near.

'Yes, sir! I left it right there when I took the order.'

'I'm sure I can't imagine what's become of it,' repeated the clergyman.

He looked rather hard at the woman, and found that she was looking hard at him. Both pairs of eyes turned instantly.

The waiter brought another bill of fare; the woman ordered tea; the waiter came back with it. The clergyman paid for both orders with a bill that looked hard-earned.

The tea was very hot; it could not be drunk down at a gulp. The clergyman, watching the woman sidewise as she sipped, seemed to grow more and more restless. His agile fingers drummed the tablecloth; he could hardly sit still. All at once he said: 'What is that calling in the street? It sounds like newsboys.'

The woman put her old head on one side and listened. 'Yes, sir. There seems to be an "extra" out.'

'Upon my word,' he said, after a pause. 'I believe I'll go get one. Good gracious! Crime is a very interesting thing, to be sure!'

He rose slowly, took down his shovel-hat from the rack near him, and, grasping his heavy stick, limped to the door. Leaving it open behind him, much to the annoyance of the proprietor in the cashier's cage, he stood a moment, looking up and down the street. Then he took a few slow steps eastward, beckoning with his hand as he went, and so passed out of sight of the woman at the table.

The eating-place was on the corner, and, outside, the clergyman paused for half a breath. North, east, south, and west he looked, and nowhere he found what his flying glance sought. He turned the corner into the cross-street, and began to walk, at first slowly, continually looking about him. Presently his pace quickened, quickened so that he no longer even stayed to use his stout cane. In another moment he was all but running, his club-foot pounding the sidewalk heavily as he went. A newsboy thrust a paper under his nose, and he did not see it.

Far down the street, nearly two blocks away, a tall figure in a blue coat stood and stamped in the freezing sleet; and the divine was speeding straight toward him. But he did not get very near. For, as he passed the side entrance at the extreme rear of the restaurant, a departing guest dashed out so recklessly as to run full into him, stopping him dead.

Without looking at her, he knew who it was. In fact, he did not look at her at all, but turned his head hurriedly up and down, sweeping the dark street with a swift eye. But the old woman, having drawn back with a sharp exclamation as they collided, rushed breathlessly into apologies:

'Oh, sir — excuse me! A newsboy popped his head into the side door just after you went out, and I ran to him to get you the paper. But he got away too quick for me, sir. I ——'

'Exactly,' said the clergyman in his quiet, deep voice. 'That must have been the very boy I myself was after.'

On the other side, two men had just turned into the street, well muffled against the night, talking cheerfully as they trudged along. Now the clergyman looked full at the woman, and she saw that there was a smile on his face.

'Well! As he seems to have eluded us both, suppose we now return to the subway?'

'Yes, sir; it's full time I——'

'The sidewalk is so slippery,' he went on gently. 'Perhaps you had better take my arm.'

Behind the pair in the dingy restaurant, the waiter came forward to shut the door, and lingered to discuss with the proprietor the sudden departure of his two patrons. After listening to some unfavorable comments on the ways of the clergy, the waiter returned to his table to set it in order.

On the floor in the carpeted aisle between tables lay a white piece of cardboard, which his familiar eye recognized as a torn scrap of one of his own bills of fare, face downward. He stooped and picked it up. On the back of it was some scribbling, made with a blue lead-pencil.

The handwriting was very loose and irregular, as if the writer had had his eyes elsewhere while he wrote, and it was with some difficulty that the waiter deciphered this message:

Miss Hinch Fourteenth Street subway Get police quick

The waiter carried this curious document to the proprietor, who read it over a number of times. He was a dull man, and had a dull man's suspiciousness of a practical joke. However, after a good deal of irresolute discussion, he put on his overcoat and went out for a policeman. He turned west, and halfway up the block spied an elderly bluecoat standing in a vestibule. The policeman looked at the scribbling, and dismissed it profanely as a wag's foolishness of the sort that was bothering the life out of him a dozen times a day. He walked along with the proprietor, and, as they drew near to the latter's establishment, both became aware of footsteps thudding nearer up the cross-street from the south. As they looked, two young policemen, accompanied by a man in a uniform like a street-car conductor's, raced around the corner and dashed into the restaurant.

The first policeman and the proprietor ran in after them, and found them staring about rather vacantly. One of the arms of the law demanded if any suspicious characters had been seen about the place, and the dull proprietor said no. The officers, looking rather flat, explained their errand. It seemed that a few moments before, the third man, who was a ticket-chopper at the subway station, had found a mysterious message lying on the floor by his box. Whence it had come, how long it had lain there, he had not the slightest idea. However, there it was. The policeman exhibited a crumpled strip torn from a newspaper, on which was scrawled in blue pencil:

Miss Hinch Miller's Restaurant police quick

The first policeman, who was both the oldest and the fattest of the three, produced the message on the bill of fare, so utterly at odds with this. The dull proprietor, now bethinking himself, mentioned the clergyman and the old woman who had taken poached eggs and tea together, called for a second bill of fare, and departed so unexpectedly by different doors. The ticket-chopper gasped out that he had seen the same pair at his station: they had come up, he said, and questioned him about trains. The three policemen were momentarily puzzled by this testimony. However, it was soon plain to them that if either the woman or the clergyman really had any information about Miss Hinch — a highly improbable supposition in itself — they would never have stopped with peppering the neighborhood with silly, contradictory messages.

'They're a pair of old fools tryin' to have sport with the police, and if I catch 'em, I'll run 'em in for it,' growled the fattest of the officers; and this was the general verdict.

The conference broke up. The dull proprietor returned to his cage, the waiter to his table; the chopper, crestfallen, departed on the run for his chopping-box; the three policemen passed out into the bitter night. They walked together, grumbling, and their feet, perhaps by some subconscious impulse, turned eastward toward the subway. And in the middle of the next block a man came running up to them.

'Mister! Look what I picked off'n the sidewalk!'

He held up a white slab which proved to be half of a bill of fare from Miller's Restaurant. On the back of it the three peering officers saw, almost illegibly scrawled in blue pencil:

Police! Miss Hinch fourteenth subw

The hand trailed off on the *w* as though the writer had been suddenly interrupted. The fat policeman blasphemed and threatened arrests. But the second policeman, who was young and wiry, raised his head from the bill of fare and said suddenly: 'Tim, I believe there's something in this.'

'There'd ought to be thirty days on the Island in it for thim,' growled Tim.

'Suppose, now,' said the other policeman, staring intently at him, 'the old woman was Miss Hinch herself, f'r instance, and the parson was shadowing her while pretendin' he never suspicioned her, and Miss Hinch not darin' to cut and run for it till she was sure she had a clean getaway. Well, now, lissen, what better could he do——'

'That's right!' exclaimed the third policeman. ''Specially when ye think that Hinch carries a gun, an'll use it, too! Why not have a look in at the subway station, anyway, the three of us?'

The proposal carried the day. The three officers started for the subway, the citizen following. They walked at a good pace and without more talk; and both their speed and their silence had a subtle psychological reaction. As the minds of the men turned inward upon the odd behavior of the pair in Miller's Restaurant, the conviction that, after all, something important might be afoot grew and strengthened within each one of them. Unconsciously their pace quickened. It was the young, wiry policeman who first broke into an open run, but the two others had been for twenty paces on the verge of it, and followed at a rapid pace.

However, these consultations and vacillations had taken time. The stout clergyman and the poor old woman had five minutes' start of the officers of the law, and that, as it fell out, was all that the occasion required. On the street, as they made their way arm in arm to the station, they were seen, and remembered, by several belated pedestrians. It was observed by more than one that the woman lagged as if she were tired, while the club-footed cleric, supporting her on his arm, steadily kept her up to his own brisk gait.

So walking, the pair descended the subway steps, came out upon the bleak platform again, and presently stood once more at the extreme uptown end of it, just where they had waited three quarters of an hour before. Near by, a porter had at some time overturned a bucket of water, and a splotch of thin ice ran out and over the edge of the concrete. Two young men, taking turns up and down, distinctly heard the clergyman warn the woman to look out for this ice. Far away to the north was to be heard the faint roar of an approaching train.

The woman stood nearest the track, and the clergyman stood in front of her. In the vague light their looks met, and each must have been struck by the pallor of the other's face. In addition, the woman was breathing hard, and her hands and feet betrayed some nervousness. It was, of course, difficult now to ignore the fact that for an hour they had been clinging rather desperately to each other, at all costs; but the clergyman made a creditable effort to do so. He talked without ceasing, in a voice sounding only a little unnatural, for the most part of the deplorable weather, with a good deal about a train to Jersey, which he had not previously mentioned. And all the time both of them kept turning their heads toward the station entrances, as if expecting some arrival.

As he talked, the clergyman kept his hands quietly busy. From the bottom edge of his black sack-coat he drew a pin, and stuck it deep into the ball of his middle finger. He took out his handkerchief to dust the hard sleet from his hat; and under his overcoat he pressed the handkerchief against his bleeding finger. While making these small arrangements, he held the woman's eyes with his own, talking on; and, still holding them, he suddenly broke off his random talk and peered at her cheek with concern.

'My good woman, you've scratched your cheek somehow! Why, bless me, it's bleeding quite badly.'

'Never mind, — never mind,' said the woman, hurriedly, and swept her eyes toward the steps.

'But, good gracious —— Just allow me —— Ah!'

Too quick for her, he leaned forward and, through the thin veil, brushed her cheek hard with the handkerchief; removing it, he held it up so that she might see the blood for herself. But she did not glance at the handkerchief, and neither did he. His gaze was riveted upon her cheek, which looked so smooth and clear where he had smudged the clever wrinkles away.

Down the steps and upon the platform pounded the feet of the three hurrying policemen. But it was evident now that the oncoming train would thunder in just ahead of them. The clergyman, standing close in front of the woman, took a firmer grip on his heavy stick and a look of stern triumph came into his face.

'You're not so terribly clever, after all!'

The woman had sprung back from him with an irrepressible exclamation; and in that instant she was aware of the police.

However, her foot slipped on the treacherous ice — or it may have tripped on the stout cane, when the clergyman suddenly shifted its position. In the next breath the train roared past.

By a curious chance, the body of the woman was not mangled or mutilated at all. There was a deep blue bruise on the left temple, but apparently that was all; even the old black hat remained on her head, skewered fast by the long pin. It was the clergyman who first made out the body, huddled at the side of the dark track where the train had flung it — he who covered the still face and superintended the removal to the platform. Two eyewitnesses pointed out the ice on which the unfortunate woman had slipped, and described their horror as they saw her companion spring forward just too late to save her.

Not wishing to bring on a delirium of excitement among the clustered bystanders, the oldest policeman drew the clergyman aside and showed him the three mysterious messages. Much affected by the shocking end of his sleuthery as he was, he readily admitted having written them. He briefly recounted how the woman's strange movements on One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Street had arrested his attention, and how, watching her closely on the car, while encouraging every opportunity for conversation, he had finally detected that she wore a wig. Unfortunately, however, her suspicions had been aroused by his interest in her, and thereafter a long battle of wits had ensued between them — he trying to summon the police without her knowledge, she dogging him close to prevent that, and at the same time watching her chance to give him the slip. He rehearsed how, in the restaurant, when he had invented an excuse to leave her for a minute, she had made a bolt and narrowly missed getting away; and finally how, having brought her back to the subway, and seeing the police at last near, he had decided to risk exposing her make-up, with this unexpectedly shocking result.

'And now,' he concluded in a shaken voice, 'I am naturally most anxious to know whether I am right — or have made some terrible mistake. Will you look at her, officer, and tell me if it is indeed — she?'

But the old policeman shook his head over the well-known ability of Miss Hinch to look like everybody else in the world but herself.

'It'll take God Almighty to tell us that, sir — saving your presence. I'll leave it f'r Headquarters,' he continued, as if that were the same thing. 'But, if it is her, she's gone to her reward!'

'God pity her!' said the clergyman.

'Amen! Give me your name, sir. They'll likely want you in the morning.'

The clergyman gave it: Reverend Theodore Shaler, of Denver; city address, a street and number near Washington Square. Having thus discharged his duty in the affair, he started sadly to go away; but, passing by the silent figure stretched on a bench under the ticket-seller's overcoat, he bared his head and stopped for one last look at it.

The parson's gentleness and efficiency had already won favorable comments from the bystanders, and of the first quality he now gave a final proof. The dead woman's little handbag, which somebody had recovered from the track and laid at her side, had slipped to the floor; and the clergyman, observing it, stooped silently to restore it. This last small service chanced to bring his head close to the drooped head of the dead woman; and, as he straightened up, her projecting hatpin struck his cheek and ripped a straight line down it. This in itself would have been a trifle, since scratches soon heal. But it happened that the point of the hatpin caught under the lining of the clergyman's perfect beard and stripped it clean from him; so that, as he rose, with a suddenly shrilled cry, he turned upon the astonished onlookers the bare, smooth chin of a woman, curiously long and pointed.

There were not many such chins in the world, and the urchins in the street would have recognized this one. Amid a sudden uproar which ill became the presence of the dead, the police closed in on Miss Hinch and handcuffed her with violence, fearing suicide, if not some new witchery; and at the station-house an unemotional matron divested her of the last and best of all her many disguises.

This much the police did. But it was everywhere understood that it was Jessie Dark who had really made the capture, and all the papers next morning printed pictures of the unconquerable little woman, and of the hatpin with which she had reached back from another world to bring her greatest — and her last — adversary to justice.

NORTH IS BLACK

Oliver La Farge

It is true that we say that North is black, and cold, and bad because of the stories of our old men, but those are good stories. They had them from the old men before them, from the time that there were no Americans. The Navajo have been here ever since the land was made, the Americans are new.

It is no use to show me that picture of mountains in the North again. I know it is white because it is all snow. I know those mountains. I have seen them. Yes, why do you suppose they call me North Wanderer? I went there, I came back with many horses. Ask my people about the horses Nahokonss Naga brought with him. Yes, that is why I went, to steal horses. I stood on a high place, praying, and my prayers fell away from me, down into the valleys. My prayers got lost, they would not fly up to the Four Quarters. It is bad there.

Give me more coffee.

I speak with one tongue, I went to steal horses. I was always brave. When I was a boy they took me to San Carlos, where the Apaches are. They taught me to talk American. I ran away, and lived all alone until my hair grew. When my hair was long again, I had made myself a bow and arrows, moccasins, a skin blanket. I had stolen two horses. I was always like that.

It is true there are good horses nearer than there. I was three moons going, and three moons coming, but I wanted to see.

Then I will tell you the truth. I am old, it is good someone should know. But you must not tell. I know you, you will not tell; no one would believe.

You see that fire? If you try to shut it up in a box, it will burn the box. I was like that. The soldiers would not let us go on the war-path. There was no work for us. Sometimes we went down to raid the Moqui a little bit, to steal sheep, but not enough. We young men were looking for trouble.

A man with a big red beard came and made a Trading Post near the railroad, a few miles from my mother's *hogahn*. I lived there, because I did not think of marriage; all the time I was studying to be a singer, learning about the Gods, and the Medicine. I was like the Black Robed Preachers at Chin Lee, I did not think about women.

Red Beard was not like other traders, he was the other kind of American. They don't have that kind out here, I got to know about them later. They are different. Red Beard was sick, that was why he came out here. He did not care about the trading. He was honest with us and we made money off him. He never understood us. He was a good man.

He had a lot of friends coming to see him, from the East. They, too, were different. They liked to wear little pistols. At this time, Americans only carried pistols when they thought there would be trouble, then they had big pistols, not like the ones most of Red Beard's friends carried. And Red Beard's friends never shot anything. Most of them did not know how to shoot. They had bad manners, like the people at Grand Canyon. We were not used to that then, two or three times we were going to kill them.

Their women came out with them. There was one who was tall, and straight, and had black hair, like an Indian's, and brown eyes. She pulled her hair tight, tying it behind, like a Navajo. I fell in love with her.

I was digging holes to plant corn one day, and I saw She-Rain coming up the valley, with a rainbow behind it. I thought, 'That looks like that American Girl.' Then I was frightened, for I knew I must be in love. How could any man think that the rainbow, that is the Way of the Gods, looked like a woman, unless his eyes were twisted with love?

The next time I was with Mountain Singer, learning Medicine, I sang the Hozogi. When I said, 'I walk with beauty all around me,' my mind wandered to her, I forgot about the Gods and the Holy Things. I said to Mountain Singer, 'My mind is bad.' He told me to fast.

When I had fasted for four days, I returned to my mother's *hogahn*. When I came in, she said, 'What is the matter with you?' I said, 'Nothing.'

She asked me again, 'What is the matter?' Again I told her, 'Nothing.'

She asked me four times, and the fourth time she said, 'Warrior-With-God, tell me what is the matter with you?'

When she called me by that name, I had to answer true. I said, 'I am sick inside, I am bad inside; I must cleanse myself.'

My mother said, 'You will not wash out your sickness, nor pray it out. That is man's talk.'

I had already fasted. Now I let down my hair, praying. I went into a sweat bath. All the time that I was there I sang. When I came out and jumped into the creek, I felt all well again. I ran, singing and leaping.

Then I saw mother-of-pearl dawn in the East, all-colour rain, and the rainbow. I heard the Four Singers on the Four Mountains. But it was midday, and clear, and the desert was silent. I had seen that American Girl come out of the post to watch me running. So I went back to my *hogahn*, and sat down, covering my face with my blanket.

My mother said, 'By and by she will go away, then you will get well.' My mother was a wise woman.

After that I tried to keep away from the post, but I was like a horse on rope. She used to hire me to guide her to places. When I had been with her and she was friendly to me, I used to feel weak, so that after I went away I sat down and groaned. Sometimes, though, I would want to leap and run, because I had foolish thoughts. When the corn began to sprout I was like that all the time. She should not have been so friendly to me.

One day she said to me, 'I will give you this bracelet if you will let me ride your pinto horse.'

He was the best horse anybody had around there. I answered, 'You do not need to pay me to ride my horse; but if you will give me the bracelet, I should like it.'

Her face was strange when she gave me the bracelet. I was afraid she would laugh at me, but she did not. My heart sang. I did not understand them, those people.

She wanted to go up to the top of Blue Rock Mesa, where the shrine is, where you can see for many days' ride all around. So I took her up there. She was not like most Americans, the way they act. They talk fast, and shout, and spit over the edge. She was quiet, and looked, and thought about it, like an Indian. Then she made me tell her the names of all the places we could see. I showed her the mountains where the Utes are, you could just see them, like a low line of smoke in the north.

She said, 'To-morrow I go up there.'

I told her, 'It is far.'

'I am going in the iron-with-fire-in-it. I am going to my brother's house, far beyond there. He lives there because there is good hunting. You can come there.'

When she began, my heart was sick; when she ended, my heart was high with joy, that she should want me to follow her. I thought I would make sure. I said, 'I do not know that trail.'

She told me she would show me on the map when we got back to the Post. I did not know about maps, then; I thought it was strong medicine. She told me about the trail, then she told me about one of the mountains you have in that picture. You see it a week before you come to it, and it is marked so that you can tell it. She showed me a picture of it. While she was talking, her voice broke once; when she got through, her face was strange. Again I thought she was going to laugh at me, but she did not, so I read those signs, and was glad.

I did not watch her go, there was no use. I went on learning to be a singer, to make myself strong. My heart was happy, and I learned well. I traded close with Red Beard, to get money. I had Mountain Singer make me a fire drill, with turquoise and abalone-shell and mother-of-pearl and black stone on it, because it would be dark in the North, and I knew I would need it. I made more arrows, with fine points to them. A man came to the Post who had a rifle, the best I had ever seen, and lots of cartridges for it. It took me three weeks to steal that rifle. Every day, I draw the North Trail in the sand. I gave that girl a name, Nahokonss Atad — that is, in American, Northern Maiden.

A lot of time went by this way. When I was ready, I went and gambled with my money. I knew that I could not lose, my medicine was sure. I gambled with some Americans, with their cards; that was easy. Then I gambled with Indians. I won very much, so that I was rich.

At the moon of tall corn there was a squaw-dance in Blue Canyon. I told my mother I would go there, and see if I could find a girl I liked to marry. She saw me gathering all the jewellery I had won.

'That is well, if you do not lose your way.' She said, 'Have you good medicine, lots of corn pollen?'

My face was ashamed when I heard that, but no one could have stopped me then.

I painted my pinto horse, so that he was an ugly dun colour, and I tied a horse-hair around his hock to make him lame. I packed my jewellery and buckskin on him, and my good blankets, and dressed myself in old American clothes, with an old blanket. I had much jewellery for her, and a silver bridle to give her with the pinto horse, I did not want it stolen. I tied turquoise to my gun to make it strong.

It was a long trip. When I was far enough North, I took my hair down and braided it, saying I was a Pai-Ute carrying a message for some Mormons. The Pai-Utes are always poor, and they are friends of the Mormons; they let me pass. I passed beyond the Ute country, through tribes I did not know. I talked signs with them, asking for this mountain. Once I had a fight with some Indians, and two times with Americans. Those Indians scalp everyone they kill, like the Utes.

I was three moons on the trail. Then I came to where snow was. It was the end of harvest moon, too early for snow, I knew I was coming to the North. I hoped to meet some of the Frozen Navajo, who live up there, but I did not. By and by it got to be all snow and colder than it ever is here. That was not like winter snow but deep like all-year snow that you see on the north side of Dokosli, high up. Then I saw the mountain.

I had not seen Indians for a week, it was all ranches and cattle. There was a railroad, and a big town. I made camp where there were some woods, away from the town. I had stolen a hat from a ranch I passed near, leaving a lot of fine horses, because I was afraid to make trouble. Now I wound my hair up around my head, so that the hat covered it. I took off my head-band. With my old American clothes, I looked like a Mexican. I talk a little Mexican. So I went into town.

That town was big. It did not look as though I could ever find Northern Maiden there. And I could not ask for her, I did not know her name. All I could do was walk around and look. I saw places where they sold bitter-water, and thought I would buy some. I had tasted it before, but never enough. The first place I went into the man said, 'Hey, Injun, get the hell out of here.'

Then I went into another, and I spoke in Mexican before the man noticed me. So he sold me drinks. I bought a lot. They cost ten cents, and I spent a dollar for them. Then I felt so good I began to dance a little bit. One of the men said, 'Hey, that Greaser's drunk, throw him out.'

They threw me out. One of them kicked me hard when I went through the door. I fell down in the snow. My sight was red with anger. I walked away, out of town, to the woods where my things were. There I made ready for the war-path — let down my hair, and took off my American clothes. I thought, none of the people in that town carry guns. Now I shall take my very good gun and shoot them, all those people. I shall burn their houses. While I am doing this, I shall find Northern Maiden; her I shall take away, and go back to my own country, with many horses, and much plunder. That way I thought.

I began making war medicine, praying to the Twin Gods. I held my gun across my knees, that my medicine should be strong for it, too. Praying like that, I fell asleep there in the middle. That is a bad thing.

When I woke up, it was night, and I was cold. I was shivering. The fire was out. My head hurt. When I thought how I had gone to sleep in the middle of my prayer, I was afraid. I put on my clothes, and made a fire with my fire drill. Then I prayed, for a long time I was praying. But my prayer would not go up; it fell down where I said it. All of a sudden I was sick for my own country, for the smell of dust on the trail when the sun is on it, for the sound of my horse's hoofs in the sand. My heart was sick for the blue South, where the rainbow is, and tall corn growing by red rocks. I remembered the smoke of my mother's fire, and the thumping as she pounded the warp down in the loom.

Then I thought how far I had come, and how I was near to Northern Maiden, and how she was waiting for me. My medicine was very strong, it was the bitter-water that had made me feel like that. I thought that I would be ashamed to go back now, and I was a brave who did not run away from things. So I rolled up in my blanket and went to sleep again. I was like that, we were warriors in those days.

There was game in the hills behind those woods, so that I had enough to eat. When I was not hunting, I stayed in the town. I stayed eight days, until I began to lose hope. Then I saw her. She was in a wagon with a man. They had two good horses with it; they were not as good as my pinto. I followed them out of town, and saw their tracks in the snow, along a road. Then I ran to my camp.

I threw away my American clothes then. I sang, and while I sang I tied up my hair like a Navajo. My headband was good, my shirt was worked with porcupine quills, my leggings had many silver buttons. My belt was of silver, my necklaces and bow-guard were heavy with silver and turquoise. I put the silver bridle on my horse, to make him look well, and so that when I gave it to her, with the pinto, she should know it was my own. Then I rode out, still singing.

I looked all around me. I said, the North is not black. The ground is white; where the sun strikes it, it is all-colour. The sky is blue as turquoise. Our old men do not know. I galloped along the trail. I sang the song about the wild-cat, that keeps time with a horse galloping and makes him go faster. That way I felt.

I started in the morning, I got in just after noon. It was a big ranch, there were many horses in the corral, but no sign of cattle. That is not like an American ranch. They were just getting out of the carriage when I rode in. When they saw me, they cried out. She was surprised, she did not think I would come. I sat still and rolled a cigarette. Inside I was not still. I looked at her, and my heart kept on saying, 'beautiful, beautiful,' like in a prayer.

She came forward to shake hands with me. Some more men and a woman came out. She told them who I was. One of the men kept on saying, 'George, George!' I thought he was calling someone. Later I found out it was his way of swearing. They were different, those people.

She told me to put my horses in the corral. She went with me while I unsaddled my pony. Her face was flushed, she was glad to see me. I could not speak, I was afraid all those people would see what I was thinking. When we were alone in the corral, I gave her the pinto horse, and the bridle. At first she would not take them.

She gave me a room to sleep and keep my things in. Then she took me into the big room where the people were.

There were her brother and his wife. They were good people. There were two other men who were good people. One of them knew Indians, he could talk American so that I could understand everything he said. There was another man who was not good. His mouth was not good. He had yellow hair, but there was a dark cloud around his head. I could see that, especially when he was thinking bad things. I did not like him, that one. There were other people who stayed with them and went away again, but these people were there all the time.

They were nice to me. I stayed there a long time. Those men were always going hunting, they took me with them. I was a good hunter, so they thought well of me. They liked a man who could do something better than they could. They thought well of me because I had come so far. They asked me to play cards with them. They did not play cards the way the Americans here taught us, except the man I did not like. I won from them, but never very much. I did not think it was good to win too much from them. They were my friends.

The man I did not like was called Charlie. He, too, wanted Northern Maiden. He was not like those others. Sometimes when they had friends and drank bitter-water, one of the women would tell them they had too much, or one of the other men would. Then they would go out and walk around until they were all right. I did not take anything. Sometimes, when there was another woman staying with them there, one of the men would be making love to her. If she told him to stop, he always stopped. This I saw, different times, when people came to stay with them. But Charlie was the only one who made love to Northern Maiden. He did not stop when she told him to. One day I was coming down the long room they had that ran between the other rooms. He was out there, trying to kiss her, the way Americans do. I walked up. He got red in the face and went away. I made talk to her as if I had not seen anything.

I stayed there a long time. I thought, when it was time for spring in my own country, I should ask Northern Maiden to come with me, and I thought she would say yes.

One day I was walking into the door of the big room, when I heard someone inside say my name. Horse-Tamer they said, that was my name, that people used. The man's voice was angry, so I listened. I could not understand everything that they said, they were talking fast in American. But I understood that Charlie was telling them that I cheated at cards. This made them angry. They said that if they caught me, they would run me out. They called me a damn Indian. I was angry; because I knew that Charlie cheated, too, as I have said. I did not understand this, so I went to Northern Maiden.

I told her that the cowpunchers taught us to cheat at cards, that we thought it was part of that game. An Indian is better at it than an American. I did not say anything about Charlie. She said that her kind of American did not cheat at cards, any more than they told lies. They were always honest. So they trusted everyone who played in a game, that was why they were so angry. They would run out any one who cheated when they trusted him. Then I understood.

I took my money and went in where they were. I said, 'Here is your money, that I have won at cards. I did not know you did not cheat, until I heard you talking. The Americans who played with us always cheated. Now I will not cheat. That is my word. It is strong.'

Northern Maiden's brother said, 'The Indian's all right.'

The other one, who knew about Indians, said, 'Yes, what he says is true. He will not cheat any more. Let him play.'

Charlie was angry, but he was afraid to say anything.

So then I played with them some more, and I watched Charlie. I knew what I wanted to do, and I took my time, like a good hunter. Finally my chance came, it was like this — We were playing poker. Charlie used to hide a good card from the pack. When he thought he could use it, he put it in the palm of his hand. Then when he reached down to pick up his draw cards, he mixed it with them. He discarded one more card than he should. Sometimes he slipped it in with the other discards; sometimes, if it was a good card, he kept it out. I knew it would be no good to find the card in his clothes, they would think I had put it there. I had to catch it in his hand, and he was quick.

This time there were a lot of people there, some men from other ranches, cowpunchers. There was a lot of money, and Charlie got excited. I was sitting next him. He did not like to see me next him. I waited till I saw he was about to use his card. I got my knife ready. When his hand was sliding along the table, before he got to the draw, I put my knife through it. He screamed, and everyone jumped up. I took out my knife. There was the ace of diamonds, and he held two other aces.

Charlie went out of the room. He was white in the face. The cowpunchers stood around for a little while, then they went away, too. I said nothing, waiting for them to thank me. These three men, the ones who lived in the house, went off into a corner and talked. I could not hear what they said. Something was wrong.

The man who understood about Indians came over to me. The rest went out.

'Now,' he said, 'you must go away. It is not your fault. Charlie is one of us. You were right to show that he cheated, but not in front of all those cowpunchers. Now we have lost face with them. We are all made ashamed.

You should have told us, and we should have caught him when no one else was here. When we see you, you will make us remember that you, an Indian, showed up our friend in front of those people. When you are here, we shall be ashamed. If a white man caught a friend of yours in front of a lot of Moqui, would you like it?'

I said, 'I see. Now I go.'

He shook hands with me. 'You are a good man,' he said, 'I want to be friends with you. I shall come and see you on your reservation. We shall hunt together.'

I said, 'Your talk is straight. It is good. Now I want meat and coffee and sugar to take on the trail.'

He brought me what I needed while I was saddling my horse. He gave me the money Charlie had won from me. He wanted to give me more.

'He will go to the train to-morrow,' he said, 'he is too weak now, you made him bleed a lot.'

It was in the middle of the afternoon that I rode away. I went up to a high hill behind the ranch-house. There I made camp. When I had a fire lighted, a little one that would not make smoke, I began my medicine. It was not good. My prayers fell away, down into the valley. I saw that a man could not pray there, where there was only one direction, North, the Black One. I wanted to go back to where there was East, and South, and West, Mother-of-Pearl dawn, Blue Turquoise, and Red Shell. I prayed the best I could. I used the last of my corn pollen. When the sun set, I made black paint with ashes. I drew the Bows of the Twin Gods on my chest. I put a black line on my forehead. I stripped to my breech-clout, moccasins, and head-band. I took off all my jewellery except my bow-guard. I took my bow, because a gun makes too much noise. Long after it was black night I went back to the ranch.

They were all in the big room, except Charlie, sitting round the fire. I came in quietly. I hid in a corner behind a chair. All the time I had my bow ready. They did not say much, but sat, not talking. One by one, they got up to go to bed. I was hoping that Northern Maiden would be the last, but if she was not, I had enough arrows. I could not have come so well to her bedroom, it was upstairs. That house was built like a Moqui house, with two floors.

My medicine was good. She stayed sitting and looking at the fire. I could see that she was sad. That did my heart good. In the fire-light she was beautiful. I stood up.

Then Charlie came into the room. I was in the corner. I did not move. He never saw me. I made ready to shoot him. He walked over until he stood in front of Northern Maiden. For a little while they looked at each other. I waited. Then he spoke.

'I'm sorry.'

She said nothing.

'Can't you forgive me?'

Then she spoke to him. She got up and stood very straight. I could not understand all those things, that they said. They were talking in American, and using words I did not know. They used words we have not got. But this I understood. She loved him. Now she sent him away, for the thing he had done. She said she was very angry. But I saw that she loved him. She gave him a ring, the ring that Americans give when they are going to marry a woman. Now she gave it back to him. I saw she was that kind, that she sent him away, although she loved him, because his heart was bad. She told him that he was like a snake. She meant he was all bad.

He went away again, holding his face down. His hand was tied up. He looked like a sick man. I let him go.

Northern Maiden sat down in the chair. She began to cry, like an American, hard, so that it hurts, and does no good. I came, then, and stood in front of her. She looked up. She did not start. She was not afraid of me.

I said, 'I did not know, now I do; I would not have done this. Here is the bracelet you gave me. I should not have it.'

She said, 'I understand.'

Then I went away. I rode all night.

I came home at the time of short corn. I had twelve good horses with me. I met a man prospecting in Chiz-Na-Zolchi. I got a good mule from him. These I showed to the people who asked me why I went away. It was good to see the canyons again, with the washes full of water from the snow. It was good to hear my horse's hoofs in the sand, and smell the dust of the trail.

I sat down by my mother's fire. The smoke was rising up straight. She was weaving a man's blanket. She said, 'This is for you, your blanket is worn out. You must choose yourself a wife, you are too much alone. That is the best medicine for you, to have a house and children. When the corn is green, tell me the one you want. I shall ask for her.'

I saw that she was right. I said, 'It is good. You will ask for one.'

But I did not care if she were old or young, beautiful or ugly.

WANTED ON THE VOYAGE

DENIS MACKAIL

LITTLE Miss Bedford had come out to South Africa as a second-class passenger, and was returning as a first-class passenger. That sounds successful, doesn't it? The mind leaps to thoughts of Rand millionaires, and other romantic adventurers, who have completed the round trip in exactly the same manner. But in little Miss Bedford's case the bald statement happens to be rather misleading For Miss Bedford was not successful.

To begin with she was a nursery-governess. Theoretically a far from ignoble calling. One teaches the young idea to shoot, one passes on the sacred torch of knowledge, one forms the character of the rising generation, the whole future of the race is in one's hands. Yet in practice what does it so often consist of? One isn't exactly a servant, but one is just as subject to a month's notice. Still less does one rank with the family, for in that case one would not dine alone at one end of the schoolroom table. And even the torch of knowledge has to be passed on with tact and discretion, or one may find that it has burnt one's fingers.

No; say what you like, it is not a profession in which you look for really successful young women; and Miss

Bedford (who had just burnt her fingers rather badly) was no exception to the great majority of her colleagues.

Two months ago, leaning over the second-class rail of the big mail-boat, she had seen Table Mountain slowly rise and fall as the big mail-boat laboured through a heavy swell towards its second port of call. 'Anything,' said Miss Bedford to herself, 'may happen in a country which has mountains like that. I wonder what's going to happen to me.'

The sense of excitement and anticipation lasted until the moment when the huge vessel was docked, and was certainly not diminished by the miracle which almost immediately supervened.

A steward came up to her where she was waiting in the alleyway with her hand-baggage.

'Miss Bedford?' he asked.

'Yes,' said little Miss Bedford.

'You're wanted on the telephone, Miss.'

The telephone? But how in the world could there be a telephone on a ship? Puzzled, and even a little suspicious, Miss Bedford followed the steward to the reading-room, and there, sure enough, was a familiar, shiny-black instrument standing on a table in the corner, with its green cable trailing away through the window. For an instant it made Miss Bedford feel quite homesick.

Then she mastered the feeling, and picked up the receiver.

'Hullo?' she said. 'Yes?'

'Miss Bedford?'

'Yes. I'm speaking.'

'This is Mr. Cutting. I'm speaking from my office in town.'

Mr. Cutting was Miss Bedford's new employer. The town was presumably Cape Town.

'Yes, Mr. Cutting?' said the nursery-governess.

'I'm sorry I can't meet you, but there's some work here I can't leave. I've sent my chauffeur down to the docks. He'll look out for you.'

'Yes, Mr. Cutting.'

'And he'll help you through the Customs.'

'Oh, thank you very much, Mr. Cutting.'

'And then he'll drive you straight out to Muizenberg. Ask for anything you want, and see you're made comfortable. I'll be back the end of the week.'

'I see, Mr. Cutting. Thank you very ——'

'Anything else you want to know?'

Not from a voice that was so sharp and businesslike, and was so obviously champing to return to the work that it couldn't leave.

'No, thank you,' said little Miss Bedford politely.

'Ah.' Mr. Cutting sounded relieved. 'All right, then. See you in a day or two. G'bye.'

Mr. Cutting dematerialised into the infinite, and Miss Bedford — having exhibited her passport and signed her name on a number of forms — left the big mail-boat and stepped ashore into the hot sun. The chauffeur spotted her almost at once, and twenty minutes later, with her one cabin-trunk on the roof of the large Daimler, she was speeding along a broad, tram-lined boulevard, bound for her new situation and her new home.

At first sight it was rather disappointingly like the London suburb from which she had just come; but presently she saw a coloured taxi-driver, and a little later a bright green bird flew over her head, and the sense of excitement and anticipation returned.

'It was awfully good of Mrs. Wissett to send me out here,' she informed herself. 'I'd never have dared to suggest it myself.'

Daring was not a quality which one would naturally associate with little Miss Bedford, but if you had ever seen the head of the Belgrave Employment Bureau you would probably have sympathised with her thoughts. Mrs. Wissett was as grim as she was immense. She was the Fate that ruled the destinies of countless nursery-governesses, the educational clearing-house that dealt with the demands of innumerable rich parents. There was no Mr. Wissett, the head of the Belgrave Employment Bureau having granted herself married rank for much the same reason that it was assumed by her more important cooks and housekeepers — in other words, for no reason at all — but then no Mr. Wissett could ever have survived the companionship of so queen-like and overpowering a woman. There are brave men, and rash men; but none so brave or rash as all that.

Little Miss Bedford looked scared and anxious for a moment as the thought of this Medusa flitted across her mind; but the next second another bright green bird flew over the car, and she remembered that Mrs. Wissett was six thousand miles away.

'And, besides,' she reflected, 'in a country with birds like that, absolutely anything might happen.'

To show you what a ridiculous creature she was, she instantly envisaged the absurd and far-fetched possibility of marriage with Mr. Cutting. It was true that she hadn't yet seen him, and didn't much like his voice. It was no less true that she was the very last little nursery-governess in the world to attempt to ensnare her employer, however rich he might be or however much of a widower. But still, if green birds were going to fly about like that...

'But I'm being silly,' she told herself. She sat straight up in the Daimler, and tried to look like a grown-up person. Tried hard, and failed.

And it was this failure, of course, that was at the bottom of all the subsequent trouble in Mr. Cutting's seaside palace at Muizenberg. For Master Christopher Cutting, who was aged seven and had run through six nursery-governesses in the last year, had seen inside the first five minutes how very far little Miss Bedford was from being a grown-up person. Or, at any rate, from being the kind of grown-up person of whom he need feel the slightest trace of fear. And from that moment he had behaved like a perfect monster.

Within a fortnight he had discovered that he possessed the power of making little Miss Bedford cry, and that was the beginning of the end. A fortnight later, Mr. Cutting summoned his only son's latest victim to his study, but the victim was under no sort of illusion that he was going to propose marriage.

'I was afraid you were going to say that,' she said, when he had quite finished.

Mr. Cutting looked almost grateful, for he hated what he called those hysterical women.

'My dear Miss Bedford,' he said, 'I know you've done your best. I know that Christopher isn't altogether an easy child. But there it is. I'm a busy man, and when I'm away at my office, or up-country, I must feel — well ——'

'Oh, quite,' said Miss Bedford. 'I know *just* what you mean.'

Mr. Cutting registered relief as well as gratitude.

'And so,' he went on, 'I must try some other arrangement. Of course you shall have a full month's notice. Of course I'll pay your passage back to England. And of course ——'

'Oh, but must I go back?' cried little Miss Bedford.

She hadn't enjoyed herself out here, but she was thinking of Mrs. Wissett.

'Come, come,' said Mr. Cutting. 'You'll like seeing your family again, won't you?'

Little Miss Bedford looked more distressed than ever.

'I haven't got any family,' she explained.

But this, of course, only increased Mr. Cutting's determination to escape all responsibility for Miss Bedford's future in Cape Colony. Besides, as he hastened to point out, he had given his word to the Belgrave Employment Bureau to restore to her native land any one they sent him who proved — er ——

'Unsuitable,' supplied Miss Bedford.

'Well,' said Mr. Cutting — 'Yes.'

So that ended the interview. Miss Bedford spent another four weeks in the palace at Muizenberg, suffering acutely from her contact with Master Christopher Cutting, and trying hard to think of some means of concealing her failure from the terrible Mrs. Wissett. But it was hopeless from the very outset. Economic pressure and Mr. Cutting's will-power would send her home, and when she got back it must be either Mrs. Wissett again or starvation. She only hoped it wouldn't be both.

The month drew to an end. Miss Bedford repacked her one cabin-trunk, and obeyed a second summons to her employer's study.

'Here,' said Mr. Cutting, 'are your tickets. I'm afraid the Castle boats are rather crowded at this time of year, but I've taken a first-class passage for you on the Viking.' He didn't mention that the Viking was a one-class boat. 'She'll take about three weeks, I suppose, but ——'

'Oh, that doesn't matter at all,' said Miss Bedford. And she looked so thankful for the additional days which would postpone her reappearance at the Belgrave Employment Bureau that Mr. Cutting very nearly said that he was sorry she was going. However, he had not become a rich man by yielding to weaknesses like that, so he compromised by handing Miss Bedford his copy of the 'Cape Times.'

'I must run along now,' he said. 'Perhaps you'd like to look at the paper.'

Miss Bedford thanked him profusely, and Mr. Cutting ran along.

'Oh, by the way,' he added, as he left the room: 'I'll send the car out to drive you down to the docks this afternoon. The Viking sails about six. And — er — good luck, Miss Bedford.'

That was the last of Mr. Cutting. The foolish Miss Bedford found her eyes brimming again at this half-hearted phrase of encouragement, but she controlled herself by glaring hard at the 'Cape Times.' It was the first newspaper that she had seen for weeks, for no one at the palace had bothered about supplying the little nursery-governess with reading material, but we are afraid that she didn't study it very intelligently. She looked at some photographs without noticing what was underneath them, and at some headlines in much the same way. 'Industrial Unrest,' she read. 'Stock-Breeders' Complaints. Movements of the Fleet. Arrest of Missing Bank-Clerk.' But newspapers aren't meant for people who only look at them once in ten weeks. She let the 'Cape Times' fall back onto Mr. Cutting's table, and went upstairs to finish packing her handbag.

At half-past two the big Daimler called for her again, and she drove back across the peninsula, rejoined the tramlines and presently careered down the breakwater to where the Viking lay at her moorings. Five thousand tons don't cut very much ice when the Kenilworth Castle is anchored fifty yards away, nor was the Viking made more attractive by the fact that she was at present engaged in taking a cargo of hides into her forehold.

'Tea, Miss?' said the ugly stewardess. 'Well, we're a bit all anyhow to-day, if you see what I mean. Why don't you go up to one of those cafés on Adderley Street?'

But little Miss Bedford had just given a ten-shilling note to Mr. Cutting's chauffeur.

'It doesn't matter,' she said. 'I think I'll lie down.'

So she lay down in her cabin. Outside the harbour derricks puffed and rattled, and the Viking's donkey-engines rattled and puffed; and once, very faintly, there came the sound of the band on the Kenilworth Castle.

The horizontal summit of Table Mountain cut across the circle of her open port, but it no longer suggested a future in which 'absolutely anything' might happen. Rather did it typify the flat monotony to which, after this brief and wasted opportunity for adventure, she was returning for the rest of her life.

'Failure,' said the derricks and donkey-engines. 'Miss Bedford's a failure. She's had her chance. She's thrown it away. Let's say it again. Failure!'

Little Miss Bedford closed her eyes. Presently the whole cabin began to vibrate, and the line of mountain-top to slide across the porthole. And later — though Miss Bedford never noticed her — the ugly stewardess came bustling in and screwed it up tight. And soon after that — well, they call them 'southeasters' out there, and they're quite bad enough even when you're on shore. But if you're beating up north in a rather underballasted, old-fashioned ship like the Viking, they are not an experience that you are at all likely to forget.

For seventy-two hours the boat heaved and plunged, and kicked and bucked, and pitched and rolled, and creaked and groaned, while the waves came smacking against the heavy glass of Miss Bedford's port and turned the stuffy cabin a beautiful dark-green colour which she was wholly unable to appreciate. For Miss Bedford was not what is known as a good sailor. The ugly stewardess, who was much kinder now that she was on her native element and away from the deteriorating influences of dry land, brought her cups of tea that smelt of condensed milk, and biscuits that smelt of damp plaster, and apples which in some strange way managed to smell of engine-oil; and every time this happened, Miss Bedford suffered a fresh relapse.

'You ought to come up and walk about a bit, my dear,' said the ugly stewardess. 'This weather's nothing to what we often get in the Bay.'

Miss Bedford found little comfort in this knowledge, even though she was convinced that she would be dead long before the Viking reached the Bay. Indeed, she now wanted to be dead. And but for the responsibility which it would have thrown on her with regard to the crew and the rest of the passengers, she would certainly have prayed that the ship might go down. But she restrained herself, which we consider did her great credit, and the ship didn't go down. On the contrary, it fought its way out of the southeaster, and on the fourth morning Miss Bedford was surprised to find that she had slept for several hours on end, that the heaving, kicking, pitching, and creaking had entirely ceased, and that the sun was shining in at a porthole which was once more wide open.

So Miss Bedford got up, and then she fainted from lack of nourishment, and then the ugly stewardess gave her a cup of tea into which she had surreptitiously poured a quantity of rum, and this appalling mixture seemed so delightful to Miss Bedford that she got up from the second time with hardly any difficulty at all, and started marching round the deck — until a new feeling of faintness warned her that she was going just a little too fast.

However, by the time that the lunch-bugle went, she really was — thanks to the rum and the fresh air — practically the original Miss Bedford again. So she made her way down to the dining-saloon and looked enquiringly at the Chief Steward.

The Chief Steward returned her look in exactly the same manner.

'Yes, Miss?' he said.

'Where am I to sit, please?' asked little Miss Bedford. For she had learnt on the voyage out that you must never sit anywhere in the dining-saloon of a liner without first asking the Chief Steward's permission.

'What name, Miss?' answered this particular Chief Steward.

'Miss Bedford,' said Miss Bedford.

But the Chief Steward had by this time decided that whatever Miss Bedford were called, it was most unlikely that she would be able to give him anything which he could properly recognise as a tip. He had also just detected the approach of certain wealthier survivors of the southeaster — though wealth on the Viking was, of course, only a comparative term — which caused him to conclude his colloquy with the little nursery-governess as quickly as possible.

'Anywhere over in that corner, Miss,' he said hurriedly, his eyes already greeting the new arrivals. Miss Bedford thanked him deeply and took her seat at an empty table round which six chairs were bolted to the floor at just that distance which turns a table-napkin from a luxury to a necessity. She selected this empty table because she felt shy of joining strangers, and for the next ten minutes she had it entirely to herself.

Then two men, both tall and sunburnt, though the one was a little stouter and the other a little thinner than the average, came into the saloon and sat down opposite her.

Miss Bedford risked an apologetic little smile, as who should say, 'Please don't take any notice of me — I came here only because I didn't know where else to go.' And the two men bowed back at her across the table.

They said nothing, however, either to Miss Bedford or to each other. And this fact rather puzzled her, for their simultaneous arrival made it almost certain that they must be travelling-companions. Miss Bedford — who read a good deal of fiction when she could get hold of it — decided that they must be empire-builders coming home on a holiday. For empire-builders were always large, and sunburnt, and silent.

'Perhaps,' she thought presently, 'if I get to know them at all, they might tell me some of their adventures.'

She glanced at them more than once when she thought they weren't looking, and by the time that the steward came round with the cabinet pudding she found herself puzzling over something else.

'I know,' she said to herself, 'that I've seen that thin one somewhere before. Or am I making a mistake? Is it only that he's like some one that I've met?'

And a little later: 'Well, whoever it is, it's quite obvious that he doesn't remember me. No; it must be a mistake.'

Nobody else joined their table during luncheon, and at dinner that night the three of them again occupied the same seats in the same silence.

But at breakfast the next day Miss Bedford heard herself say, 'Good-morning.' She addressed this remark rather more particularly to the thin empire-builder, partly because he had sat down first, partly because she rather preferred his appearance, and partly because she was again wondering if she hadn't met him on some forgotten occasion. But it was the stout one who answered her.

'Good-morning,' he said. 'A nice day.'

'Yes,' said Miss Bedford. 'I'm glad it's so smooth again.'

'Ah,' said the stout empire-builder. 'You're not much of a sailor, I reckon.'

Little Miss Bedford admitted that she wasn't much of a sailor.

'But it's generally calm in the tropics, isn't it?' she asked.

'So I've heard,' replied the stout empire-builder. 'But I've made the trip only once.'

'I expect you'll be glad to get home, then,' said Miss Bedford.

The stout empire-builder looked at his friend, almost as though he were considering consulting him as to the proper answer. It suddenly struck Miss Bedford that perhaps these men, too, in spite of their size and sunburn, had not made such a success of their time in South Africa as they had hoped. She wondered if she had said the wrong thing, but while she was still wondering, the stout man answered her question.

'I reckon,' he said, 'one's always glad when a long job's over.'

Miss Bedford gave a little start, for the words had reminded her again how short her own job had been.

'Oh, yes,' she said nervously. 'Quite.'

And suddenly the thin stranger looked across at her; a curious, penetrating look which not only seemed to read her whole story, but also to express some kind of urgent warning. Miss Bedford felt quite uncomfortable.

'Oh!' she gasped. 'Have I said anything wrong?'

The thin stranger's stare turned to a sardonic grin.

'I beg your pardon,' he said, speaking for the first time since she had seen him. 'I had an idea ——'

'There!' interrupted Miss Bedford. 'I knew it all along, but I've such a shocking memory. We've met before, haven't we?'

The thin stranger looked flabbergasted.

'Met before?' he exclaimed. 'Impossible.'

And with this indignant denial he closed his mouth like a trap, rose from his seat and marched out of the saloon. Miss Bedford gazed after him in the utmost bewilderment and embarrassment.

'What have I said?' she demanded feebly. 'What have I done?'

The fat empire-builder leant confidentially across the round table.

'You mustn't mind him,' he said kindly. 'He's — well, he's a bit upset at going home. Things didn't turn out the way he'd hoped, and — well, the fact is, he's rather a nervous chap. I wouldn't ask him too many questions, if I were you.'

'But ——' said little Miss Bedford, and stuck there. She hadn't asked any questions at all, but she was miserable at the thought of having in some way put her foot in it. She felt no curiosity as to the manner in which the thin stranger's expectations had been falsified, but she couldn't bear to think that she had said anything to remind him of them.

'I must explain to him,' she thought. 'I must tell him how it was the last thing in the world I meant. I can't have him thinking I'm like that.'

But the difficulty was to catch him alone. All morning the two friends paced the deck side by side, passing Miss Bedford's chair a hundred times without looking at her. At lunch-time they entered the saloon just as she was leaving. At tea-time they never appeared at all. And though at dinner they were in their usual places, they arrived and left together.

Later in the evening, however, Miss Bedford, coming up onto the boat deck to get a last breath of fresh air, found the thin stranger leaning over the rail behind the officers' quarters, staring at the phosphorescent wake which trailed away from the Viking towards the Cape. At the sound of her footsteps he turned round.

'Oh,' said Miss Bedford, a little breathlessly. 'I was looking for you.'

'For me?'

'Yes, I wanted to say how sorry I am if I seemed rude at breakfast this morning. I couldn't bear you to ——'

'Rude?' broke in the stranger. 'Rubbish. It was I who was rude.'

'But your friend said ——'

'My friend?'

'Yes. The other man. Isn't he your friend?'

The thin stranger gave a thin laugh.

'As good a friend as I've got,' he answered. 'What did he say?'

'He told me you'd been disappointed about something, and he made me feel ——' The feeling seemed to defeat her efforts to describe it. 'But,' she went on, 'he advised me not to ask you any questions, and so ——'

'Very sound advice,' said the thin stranger. And immediately on top of this: 'I beg your pardon. That was rude of me, too.'

'I — I'm awfully sorry,' said Miss Bedford.

'That my manners are so bad?'

'No, no. I mean, that you should have had a disappointment.'

'Oh?' said her companion.

'But of course I am. You see, I've just had rather a disappointment myself. And that makes me — well, it makes me understand how one would feel if people — I mean to say, if I'd had any idea ——'

'Forget it,' said the other. 'If Taylor had told you the whole story, he'd have said I deserved what I got.'

'Oh, but I'm sure you didn't,' cried Miss Bedford. 'No one ever deserves to be disappointed.'

'Didn't you?'

But here, it seemed, little Miss Bedford wasn't quite sure.

'I don't know,' she said. 'Sometimes I think if I'd tried harder; if I'd been more sensible about it all; if I hadn't shown how much I minded...'

Her voice died away, as she frowned at the ship's wake. And then suddenly it began again. For though Heaven knew that she had never meant to speak of her failure to a living soul — except, of course, Mrs. Wissett, who could be depended upon to make her — yet Heaven was no less aware of the relief which such confession might bring. And especially — for that is the old part about confessions — to some one she didn't know.

'You see,' she said, 'I've always had to earn my own living, and so...'

And out it all came. Her struggles, the places she had been glad to leave, the places she had been sorry to leave, the Belgrave Employment Bureau, the offer of a post in South Africa, the thrill of the voyage out on the mail-boat, the effect of the peculiar outline of Table Mountain, the green birds, Mr. Cutting and his palace at Muizenberg, Mr. Cutting's utterly uncontrollable son, Mr. Cutting's ultimatum.

And now, the voyage home.

'But do you know,' she finished, 'somehow I feel better about it already — now I've told somebody. Isn't that funny?'

The thin stranger turned from his scrutiny of the ship's wake, and looked at her.

'Better?' he repeated.

'Yes,' said little Miss Bedford. 'I suppose it was the way you listened to me. You've made me feel ——'

'What?'

'Braver,' said Miss Bedford.

The red glow of a cigar came round the corner of the deck-house, and from behind it a deep voice.

'That you, Shaw?'

'Yes,' said the thin stranger.

'Turning in?'

'Yes.'

Without a word to little Miss Bedford, the thin stranger left her and followed his stout acquaintance down the companion. The night was so still that she could hear them chatting together as they passed below her again on the promenade deck.

'—— only reminding you,' said the man called Taylor.

'Do you suppose I'm likely to forget?' said the other.

Miss Bedford found herself wondering again what was the relationship between these two. But she was too sleepy to wonder for long. Too sleepy, and too much interested in the sudden lightening of the dark load on her mind.

Right up to the Canaries the sea was like a mill-pond. On the Kenilworth Castle they would be having organised sports and organised deck-croquet tournaments and organised fancy-dress dances. But not on the Viking. Social intercourse on the Viking was always — and this voyage was no exception — restricted by the consciousness of almost all those on board that to be on the Viking at all was something to be a little ashamed of. The

Viking is, in truth, rather a depressing vessel, with this long tradition of seagoing snobbery; and though every morning the deck-steward religiously puts out a set of ancient quoits, nobody ever seems to use them. People prefer to spend their time in complete idleness, reserving their social gifts for a *milieu* where there is a better chance of pretending that they are superiors to their fellow creatures. On the Viking this pretence is bound to break down at once.

But one friendship did spring up on board. Miss Bedford and Mr. Shaw spent long hours tramping the deck together, and leaning over the rail together, and sitting side by side in the battered deck-chairs which the Viking hires out to you at five shillings for the three weeks' voyage. You could hardly call it a flirtation. If you had lurked behind them to overhear their talk, you must, indeed, very soon have been bored to death. They had nothing to say to each other, after Miss Bedford had said everything at that first conference on the boat deck. And yet, surely, there must have been some reason for their constant companionship.

Well, in Miss Bedford's case we know pretty well what it was. Something in Mr. Shaw's size and silence and moody impassivity seemed to give her more courage every day in facing the future. She no longer dreamt of Mrs. Wissett, now that she had exorcised that nightmare by confession to a third party. She had found a new sense of proportion which set that ogress in her proper place.

But what did Mr. Shaw get out of it? He can hardly have been flattered by the attentions of so colourless a creature. Was it unselfishness, then? Did he see the help he was in soothing Miss Bedford's jangled nerves, or did he simply take the line of least resistance?

It is difficult to reply. The fat Mr. Taylor might have had views on this subject; but whatever they were, he kept them to himself. He showed no jealousy at this redistribution of the trio at that corner table in the dining-saloon. But for all that, he was generally there in the background. Watching. Smiling to himself sometimes. And then, abruptly, the smile would fade from his face.

The Viking reached Madeira. Lighters came out with coal and water, and a few rowing boats with divers, or merchants with lace and wicker chairs. But the ship's reputation didn't encourage the swarm of craft which besieged the mail-steamers. Some of the passengers proposed to lunch on shore.

'But why not?' asked little Miss Bedford. 'You've been so good to me all this time, and I've been longing to do something in return. Can't you see I've been looking forward to it?'

'I'm sorry,' said Mr. Shaw.

'Well, will you come if I let you pay your share? Is that what's stopping you?'

Mr. Shaw nodded his head towards his huge travelling-companion — there in the background as usual.

'Ask Taylor what he thinks,' he said. And he turned away.

Miss Bedford may have been puzzled, but she had no pride, false or otherwise.

'Mr. Taylor,' she said, 'I wanted Mr. Shaw to come and have lunch with me in the town, but he says — he says I've got to ask you.'

Mr. Taylor shifted his considerable weight onto the other leg.

'I'm sorry,' he said.

'What do you mean?'

'I'm afraid he can't.'

'But — but — I don't want to be rude; but why ——'

Mr. Taylor leant forward so suddenly that her voice broke off.

'Look here, Miss Bedford,' he said. 'I'm a bit older than you. And perhaps I've done a bit more travelling. I'll give you some advice.'

Miss Bedford stared at him.

'People on ships,' said Mr. Taylor, 'aren't always the same as people on shore. A ship's a little world of its own, eh? Remember that, and you'll be all right. Forget it, and — well, you'll make me sorry I've done what I did.'

The words were cryptic enough, in all conscience. But not the intonation. Little Miss Bedford drew herself up to her full height of four feet ten inches, and stamped on the deck.

'I won't ask you to explain that,' she said. 'But I know something about loyalty between friends. No; you needn't be afraid I'll tell Mr. Shaw. And you needn't be afraid I shall speak to you again, either. You're in my way, please. I'm going to my cabin.'

She went below; she bolted the cabin door, she sat on the edge of her berth, and — yes, we were afraid it was coming — she realised that she had fallen in love for the first time in her life. She didn't even know Mr. Shaw's initials, but his friend's attempted warning — whatever it meant — had pushed her, as it were, over the brink of the precipice. Her heart was beating as it had never beaten before.

She stayed down there all day. In the late afternoon the Viking resumed her voyage, but it wasn't until breakfast the next morning that Miss Bedford reappeared in the saloon. Mr. Taylor looked at her apologetically, but said nothing. Mr. Shaw was silent as ever. Miss Bedford stared steadfastly at her plate.

'If I mean anything to him at all,' she thought, 'he must know.'

So much seemed certain. But whether Mr. Shaw knew or not, he neither looked nor spoke. All morning Miss Bedford waited for him in vain. At lunch-time Mr. Taylor came into the saloon alone.

'Shaw's a bit under the weather,' he announced.

Miss Bedford didn't answer.

Two days later, Mr. Shaw was still under the weather, though the weather in the dreaded Bay was as fine and calm as in the tropics. Miss Bedford had never thought to wish for storms and tempests, but she did wish for them now. She wished for anything that could make her forget the aching monotony of these endless days. But nothing came.

The Viking passed Ushant. And then, suddenly, a horrible, shattering din shook the whole vessel. A sound like the bellowing of an angry giant.

Miss Bedford was dining alone opposite Mr. Taylor, and she was so startled that she had to look across at him.

'The syren,' he explained. 'I'm afraid we're running into a fog.'

Miss Bedford took a sip at her glass of water.

'Any one meeting you?' asked Mr. Taylor. 'I'm sending a marconigram to say we'll be late. Shall I send one for you?'

Foolish, obstinate Miss Bedford shook her head, rose from her seat, and returned to her cabin.

Hour after hour the syren bleated and roared, while the throbbing of the engines grew slower and slower. About eight o'clock in the morning they stopped altogether. But it was still so dark that Miss Bedford, dressed already after a sleepless night, had the electric light on in her cabin. The sudden silence from the engine-room made the voices of other passengers come clearly through to her from their staterooms, and from the alleyway outside.

'The Needles,' they were saying. 'Somewhere off the Needles.' 'The fourth officer says we're near the Needles.'

'I'm not afraid,' said Miss Bedford to herself. But she didn't want to be alone. She opened her cabin door. And as she did so she saw Mr. Shaw coming down the corridor.

'Oh!' she cried.

'It's all right,' said Mr. Shaw. 'Nothing to worry about.'

'No, no,' gasped Miss Bedford. 'It's not that. I don't care what happens. I only ——'

And suddenly all the lights went out. In the distance a woman screamed.

'Here!' said Mr. Shaw's voice.

And a hand caught hold of Miss Bedford's in the darkness.

'It's all right,' he said again. He said something else about dynamos, but Miss Bedford didn't attempt to take it in. Thrills — unlike anything she had ever known in her life — were running up and down her right arm, piercing her heart, making her catch her breath.

'You're not frightened?'

'Frightened?' She heard herself laughing, though there was a terrifying sound of feet rushing overhead. No, no. I'm happy. Happier than any one in ——'

Somebody stumbled past her.

'Damn you, Taylor!' snapped Mr. Shaw. 'You're not wanted here.'

'Can't be helped,' said Mr. Taylor's voice.

The woman screamed again.

'Get out!' said Mr. Shaw. 'Leave me alone, I tell you, or by ——'

There was a click in the darkness. Miss Bedford felt the grip on her hand intensify, and then, as swiftly, relax.

'Go back in your cabin,' said Mr. Shaw. 'Do you hear me? Miss Bedford, for my sake — for your own sake ——'

The Viking gave a lurch as the engines suddenly started again. Miss Bedford's cheek hit the rough surface of a man's sleeve. And the lights came on.

Mr. Shaw uttered his thin laugh, and thrust her away.

'Too late,' he said. 'And now you know.'

He held up his left hand. A steel bracelet was fastened closely round the wrist, a steel chain ran from it, and Mr. Taylor was grasping the other end of the steel chain.

A mist rose before little Miss Bedford's eyes. As it cleared away she saw, as distinctly as though it were really there, a crumpled copy of the 'Cape Times.' A headline slid into place under a photograph.

'Arrest of Missing Bank-Clerk.'

And then the mist came back, thicker and more suffocating than ever.

'It's all right,' shouted a voice that she never heard. 'We only stopped to pick up the pilot.'

And so Mr. Taylor went back to Scotland Yard and was promoted, and Mr. Shaw went to the New Bailey and got three years. And as for little Miss Bedford — well, there was nothing else for it.

She went back to Mrs. Wissett.

LAMBERT ORME

HAROLD NICOLSON

I

IT WOULD be impossible, I feel, to actually be as decadent as Lambert looked. I split the infinitive deliberately, being in the first place no non-split diehard (oh, the admirable Mr. Fowler!), and desiring secondly to emphasise what was in fact the dominant and immediate consideration which Lambert evoked. I have met many men with wobbly walks, but I have never met a walk more wobbly than that of Lambert Orme. It was more than sinuous, it did more than undulate: it rippled. At each step a wave was started which passed upwards through his body, convexing his buttocks, concaving the small of his back, convexing again his slightly rounded shoulders, and working itself out in a backward swaying of the neck and head. This final movement passed off more rapidly than the initial undulations, with the resulting impression of a face upturned generally, but bowing at rhythmic intervals, as if a tired royalty or a camel slouching heavily along the road to Isfahan. At each inclination the lock of red-gold hair which shrouded the lowness of his brow would flop, and rise again, and then again would flop. He was a tall young man and he would bend his right knee laterally, his right foot resting upon an inward-pointing toe. He had retreating shoulders, a retreating forehead, a retreating waist. The face itself was a curved face, a boneless face, a rather pink face, fleshy about the chin. His eyelashes were fair and fluttering; his lips were full. When he giggled, which he did with nervous frequency, his underlip would come to rest below his upper teeth. He held his cigarette between the index and the middle fingers, keeping them outstretched together with the gesture of a male impersonator puffing at a cigar. His hands, rather damp on their inner side, gave the impression on their outer side of being double-jointed. He dressed simply, wearing an opal pin, and a velour hat tilted angularly. He had a peculiar way of speaking: his sentences came in little splashing pounces; and then from time to time he would hang on to a word as if to steady himself: he would say 'Simplytooshattering FOR words,' the phrase being a slither with a wild clutch at the banister of 'for.' He was very shy.

I had not met nor noticed Lambert Orme during my first term at Oxford, but in the Easter vacation he came out to Madrid with a letter of introduction to my people. They asked him to luncheon. I eyed him with sullen disapproval. He stood for none of the things which I had learnt at Wellington. Clearly he was not my sort. He had the impudence to announce that he had resolved to devote himself to art, music and literature. 'Before I am twenty-one,' he said, 'I shall have painted a good picture, written a novel, and composed a waltz.' He pronounced it *valse*. My gorge rose within me. I refused during the whole course of luncheon to speak to Lambert Orme. And yet behind my indignation vibrated a little fibre of curiosity. Or was it more than curiosity? I hope that it was something more. Subsequently I was reproved by my mother for my behaviour. She said in the first place that I should have better manners. In the second place she said that I was little more than a Philistine. And in the third place she said that she was sure that poor boy wasn't very strong.

It interests me to recapture my own frame of mind at the time of this my first meeting with Lambert Orme. It amuses me to look back upon the block of intervening years in which I also aped æstheticism, toyed with the theory that I also could become an intellectual. Have I returned after all these garish wanderings to the mood which descended upon me that afternoon in the dark and damask dining-room at Madrid? No, I have not returned. It is true that some faint and tattered fibres of heartiness do still mingle with my ageing nerves. I *have* my Kipling side. But I can at least admit to-day that Orme was in several ways a serious person. And I have been told by people whose opinion I would not dare to disregard that such was indeed the case.

2

The immediate result of my mother's lecture was that I promised to take the fellow for a ride. At the back of my mind (but not I fear so very far at the back) was a desire to humiliate Lambert, a quite caddish desire on my part to show off. I sent the horses to the entrance of the Casa de Campo and drove down there with Lambert in a cab. He mounted his horse and remained there with surprising firmness, and, moreover, with an elegance which shamed the clumsiness of my own arrant style. His languid manner dropped from him; if his back curved slightly it was but with a hellenic curve, the forward-seat of some Panathenaic rider. I was at pains to readjust my conception of him to this altered angle. We rode out under the avenues to where the foot-hills look back to the façade of the palace chalk-white against the smoke above the town: in front, the ramparts of the Guadarrama were jagged with pinnacles of snow. The larks rose from clumps of broom and lavender: a thousand larks above us: a shrill overtone under the crisp spring sky; and from west to east a flock of April clouds trailed rapidly, pushing in front of them patches of scudding shade. The feeling of that afternoon is now upon me: I see no reason to become sentimental about it: even in our most intimate period Lambert Orme possessed for me no emotional significance: yet I recognise that on that afternoon the sap began to mount within me.....

Not that Lambert said very much. I feel indeed that he was actually unconscious of my existence. He was thinking probably of Albert Samain and of Henri de Régnier, of how pleasant it was, that spring day, among the uplands of Castille. I said: 'Over there — you may see it if the sun strikes — is the Escorial.' He said, 'Yes, I see.' I said, 'And Aranjuez is over there,' pointing vaguely towards Toledo. He turned his head in the direction indicated. 'And Segovia?' he asked. I was not very certain about Segovia, but I nodded northwards. 'La Granja,' I added, 'is quite close to it — really only a few miles.' We turned our horses, and the wind and sun were behind us. The smoke of the town billowed into sharp layers, an upward layer of white smoke hanging against a sweep of grey smoke, in its turn backed by a crinkled curtain of black. The sun and snow-wind behind us lit and darkened this grisaille. 'Oh!' I exclaimed, 'what an El Greco sky!' It was an opening. He could have taken it had he wished. He merely said, 'Does the King live in the palace? Is he there now?' I answered that he was.

We crossed the Manzanares, where there were women washing white sheets. They beat them against the boulders. The palace above us was turning pink against the sunset. Lambert asked me to tea. I gave my horse to the groom and walked round with him to the rooms he had taken near the Opera House. It was some sort of pension, and he had characteristically caused the walls to be distempered with a light buff wash, and had arranged the room with red silk, and walnut furniture, and two large gilt candelabra from a church. He was very rich. Upon his writing-table lay a ruled sheet of music-manuscript, and upon another table some paint-brushes and tubes of water-colour. He had painted a little picture of an infanta in what I now realise to have been the manner of Brabazon. It was rather good. There were a great many cushions and several French books. He became artificial again when he entered his rooms and his voice slithered and he ordered tea in highly irritating French. There was a sheet of vellum lying near the fireplace on which, in an upright scribble, Lambert had written: 'Mon âme est une infante...' and then again 'Mon âme est...' and then, very calligraphically, 'en robe de parade.' It was cold in his room and he lit the logs in the fire. He then threw incense on it, and a puff of scented smoke billowed beyond the grate. My antagonism returned to me.

Lambert thereafter became very foolish about the tea. He did hostess: his gestures were delicate: there was a tea-cloth which was obviously his own. I lit my pipe and said I must be going. He picked up a book at random: I really believe it was at random. He said, 'Would you like to take this?' I said I would. It was the 'Jardin de Bérénice.' I suppose that, really, is what dates the occasion.

3

When I returned to Oxford I visited Lambert in his rooms at Magdalen, drawn by an attraction which I should have hesitated to admit. They were in the new buildings and looked out upon the deer park: as one sipped one's Malaga, one could hear the stags barking amorously underneath the trees. His sitting-room was exquisitely decorated. When I think of that room I am again convinced that there was something *cabotin* about Lambert Orme: people at the age of twenty should not have rooms like that. He had painted it a shiny black: there were grey sofas with petunia cushions: there was a Coromandel cabinet with blue china on the top and some hardstone stuff inside. It was not in the least like the room of an undergraduate: it made me at first rather ashamed of my own room with its extracts from 'the hundred best pictures,' its photograph of the charioteer of Delphi, and its kettle-holder with the Balliol arms: it made me, in the end, like my own room very much indeed. And yet inevitably I was entranced by that little *gîte* (I use the correct word) at Magdalen: by the firelight flickering upon the yellow books: by the Manet reproductions, by the Sobranye cigarettes in their china box. Lambert possessed even in those days a collection of curious literature, and I would sit there after dinner reading 'Justine,' or the novels of M. Achille d'Essebac, or even 'Under the Hill.' All this, I feel sure, was admirable training. My early oats I find were singularly tame. But they were oats none the less. Lambert at the time was writing his novel 'Désiré de St. Aldegonde.' He would read me passages which I failed entirely to understand. They were in the style, curiously enough, of M. Maeterlinck: a style which, in English, tastes like bananas and cream. The book was published some time in 1910 by the Bodley Head. It attracted no attention whatever. And when Lambert, under the influence of M. Guillaume Apollinaire, came to adopt his second manner, he bought up the remaining copies of 'Désiré' and burnt them on the rocks at Polperro.

It was all very pleasant and seductive my dropping down like that to Magdalen; but it became a little awkward when Lambert, in his velour hat, would climb the hill to visit me at Balliol. In any case, I never learnt to cope with Balliol until after I had left it: my real Oxford friends were only made when I met them again in after life. The effect of Balliol upon my development was salutary and overpowering. But it didn't work at the time. On looking back at Balliol I realise that during those three years I was wholly abominable. That Balliol should have shared this opinion indicates its admirable sense. But although I had at that time but little conception of what Balliol was thinking, yet I realized quite definitely that they would not, that they did not, approve of Lambert at all. I cannot therefore say that I relished his visits. My sitting-room with its grained wood walls looked somewhat squalid at his entry: the rep sofa, the brass reading lamp with its torn red shade, that other light hanging naked but for a glass reflector: the inadequate books: Stubbs's charters, Smith's Classical Dictionary, Liddell and Scott — none of that crystalline glitter of those rooms at Magdalen. My scout would burst in with his cap on, and bang the chipped plates beside the fire: the tin covers rattled. The kettle also rattled internally when one poured it out. There was always a little coal inside the kettle. The spout of the tea-pot spouted diagonally owing to a slight abrasion. The cloth was stained and bore in place of embroidery my name in marking ink. There were buttered buns and anchovy toast. Lambert ate them gingerly.

'I wish,' I said to him, being incensed by the refinement of his attitude, 'that you wouldn't wear a hat.'

'But if I didn't,' he giggled, 'I might be taken for an undergraduate.'

'But at least not that hat, and at least not at that angle.'

'Now don't be tahsome.'

There were moments when I hated Lambert. It is a mystery to me how Magdalen tolerated him for so long. The end came, as was inevitable, after a bump supper. I never knew what they did to Lambert: I know only that he escaped in his Daimler never to return. I missed him for a bit, and then I was glad of his departure. I realised that I had been tarred a little by his brush. I mentioned the matter, rather tentatively, to Sligger Urquhart. He seemed to have no particular feeling for Lambert, either for or against: he pouted for a moment, and then said that he had found him 'absurdly childish.' I do not suppose that that remark was intended to be very penetrating: I know only that it penetrated me like a lance. The angle from which I had begun to regard Lambert Orme was shifted suddenly: it ceased to be an ascending angle and became in the space of a few seconds a descending angle: I had begun, in a way, to look up to Lambert: I now, quite suddenly and in every way, found myself looking down. A few days later Sligger, most subtle of dons, presented me with a copy of 'Marius the Epicurean.' I found it on my table when I came back from the river: there was a note inside saying, 'I think you had better read this': and on the fly-leaf he had written 'H.N. from F.F.U.' By this homœopathic treatment I was quickly cured. And yet this false start, if it was a false start, left me troubled and uncertain. I remained uncertain for several months.

4

As so often in such cases, my ensuing reaction against the eighteen-nineties took the form of a virulent loathing which I have never since been able to shake off. I am assured by reliable people that it was a serious movement of revolt and liberation: I can see for myself that the 'Yellow Book' group were all extremely kind and made jokes which, at the time, were found amusing: I am prepared to respect, but I cannot like them. The whole business is too reminiscent of those puzzled and uncertain months at Oxford. It takes me straight back to that room at Magdalen: 'Now listen to this, it's too too wonderful: it's really toomuchfun.' I have a sense of many little wheels revolving brightly but devoid of cogs. I have a sense predominantly of the early Lambert Orme.

I did not see him again for some five years. He went round the world and sent me a postcard from Yokohama. He was immensely impressed by the beauty of American cities, and it was from them, I think, that he first learnt to see life as a system of correlated planes. It was several years, however, before his very real and original talent for association was able finally to cast the slough of symbolism. When I next met him he was still intensively concerned with the relation between things and himself: it was only in his final period that he became predominantly interested in the relation of things towards each other. His talent, which though singularly receptive was not very muscular, had failed to extract any interesting synthesis from the confrontation of the universe with his own twitching heart: he had tried, and he had failed, to interpret conscious cognition by a single simple emotion. But in his later period he did in fact succeed in conveying an original analysis, implicit rather than expressed, of the diversity and interrelation of external phenomena: he was able to suggest a mood of subconscious perplexity sensitive to unapparent affinities. The conception of life as a repetition of self-contained and finite entities can be integrated only by the pressure of a compelling imagination: Lambert's imagination though mobile was not compelling: I suspect indeed that less power is required to disintegrate such entities, to suggest a world of atoms fortuitously whirling into certain shapes, to indicate a tremendous unknown, quivering below the crust of our convention. His later poetry succeeded because of its reference to this unapparent reality. I am now assured that some of his later poems were very respectable.

Meanwhile, however, Lambert Orme continued to represent for me something 'absurdly childish'; his attitude of mind struck me as undeveloped and out of date. He was obsessed by false claims. He was no longer, not in any sense, a guide: he was just someone who rather uninterestingly had wandered off. The circumstances of our meeting, five years after he had escaped from Magdalen, confirmed me in this opinion. It made me very angry with Lambert Orme, and when I think of it to-day I become angry again.

He came to Constantinople on his way back from Egypt. He left a note saying that he had 'descended' at the Pera Palace and would like to see me. I was interested to hear from him again, and told him to come to the Embassy at nine-thirty the next morning and I would take him sailing up the Bosphorus. I had a sailing boat in those days, a perilous little affair, which I called the Elkovan. I had bought it in a moment of optimism, imagining that I would sail daily out into the Marmora, and that on Sundays I would go for longer expeditions to Ismid and Eregli and the Gulf of Cyzikos. But in practice the thing became a bore. The current which streamed out from the Black Sea permitted no such liberty of movement. I ascertained that if I followed the current I should be unable, when the wind fell at sunset, to return. So I would tack painfully against the stream, gaining but a mile or so in as many hours, and then I would swing round and float back rapidly while the minarets showed their black pencils against the setting sun. This pastime became monotonous; it was only on those rare occasions when the south wind blew strongly that one derived the impression of sailing at all. The Sunday on which I had invited Lambert Orme to accompany me was one of these occasions. A spring day opened before me, enlivened by warm gusts of the Bithynian wind — the wind which the Byzantines to this day call *νότος*: I ordered a large and excellent luncheon; with luck we should get out beyond Kavak and into the Black Sea. We might bathe even. I looked forward to my day with pleasure.

I waited for Lambert Orme. At ten a man brought me a note in his neat hellenic writing. 'To-day is too wonderful,' he wrote, 'it is the most wonderful day that ever happened: it would be too much for me: let us keep to-day as something marvellous that did not occur.' I dashed furiously round to his hotel, but he had already left with his courier to visit the churches. I scribbled 'Silly ass' on my card and left it for him. I then sailed up the Bosphorus indignant and alone. When I returned my servant met me with a grin: my sitting-room was banked with Madonna lilies. 'C'est un monsieur,' he said, 'qui vous a apporté tout ça.' 'Quel monsieur?' 'Un monsieur qui porte le chapeau de travers.'

5

I thereafter and for many years dismissed Lambert from my mind. As a person he really did not seem worth the bother, as an intellect he was absurdly childish — he represented the rotted rose-leaves of the 'Yellow Book.' I came to be more and more ashamed of the period when I also had dabbled in æstheticism, a feeling of nausea came over me when I thought of the Malaga and cigarettes in that expensive room at Magdalen. Lambert represented a lapse.

I do not to-day regard him as a lapse. He was inconvenient doubtless and did me external harm. But he represented my first contact with the literary mind. I see now that my untutored self required some such stimulant:

that it should have been Grand Marnier and not some decent brandy is immaterial: he provided an impetus at the very moment when the wheels hesitated to revolve. Balliol was all very well, and Sligger Urquhart at least understood and assisted, but my palate was, in fact, too insensitive for so matured a vintage. I therefore look on Lambert, in retrospect, as a short cut. What I failed to realise was the possibility that Lambert also might grow up. His later method, that obtuse angle from which he came to regard life, would, had I realised it, have been an even shorter cut and to more interesting objectives. But once I had discarded him, I did so with no reservations. I thought that any resumption of his influence would entail a retrogression: I failed in my stupidity to see that he had once again sprung ahead of me: and while I dabbled in Bakst and Flecker, Lambert had already reached the van.

As I write of this period, its atmosphere of diffident uncertainty descends upon me. I wish to convey some sharp outline of Lambert Orme, but it all results in a fuzz of words. I am still quite unaware whether I regard Lambert as ridiculous, as tragic, or as something legendary. A section of me is prepared to take him seriously, to read with admiration those of his poems which I am told are good. Another, and less reputable section, wishes to deride Lambert, to hold him up to obloquy. And yet another section feels rather soppy about him, simply because he died in the war. Which is, of course, absurd. Physically he is definite enough. I can see him again, as at our next meeting, sinuously descending the steps of the National Gallery. A day in late October with the cement around the fountains glistening from the damp of fog. A stream of traffic past Morley's Hotel, another stream past the shop of Mr. Dent, a river of traffic down Whitehall. And in the centre, that ungainly polygon, doves and urchins and orange-peel, and a sense of uncloistered quiet. It was the autumn of 1913: he had abandoned his velour, which since our Oxford days had become the headgear of the proletariate: he wore instead a black Borsalino which he had purchased while studying baroque at Ancona. But still he wilted: he wilted when I accosted him: he entered the Café Royal with a peculiarly self-conscious undulation which made me shy.

He still employed the old vocabulary (he said that I had been 'very tahsome' at Constantinople), but his whole angle had shifted. The former avid subjectivity was leaving him, he was far less excited: his interest in life was no less passionate but had come under some form of control: predominantly he was interested in the sort of things that had never interested him before. He was in love with the wife of the Rumanian Military Attaché at Brussels. He talked about it quite simply as if he had always been a sensualist. He had decided to live in Paris, and had, in fact, already bought a house at Neuilly: he would write and collect pictures, and see to his own education: once a month he would go to Brussels for love and inspiration. He had evolved a not uninteresting theory of the necessity of living in a mechanical framework: at Neuilly the externals of his life were to be organised according to the strictest time-table: every day was in all material respects to be identical with every other day: this rhythmic repetition would in the end produce a background of symmetry against which all new experience would acquire a more intense significance, would assume the proportions of a physical displacement. The eighteen-nineties and the nineteen hundreds (he spoke of them in a detached and objective manner) had failed because they dissipated their emotions: they were unable either to concentrate or to select. Their system of life was garish and dispersed: his own system, out at Neuilly, would be a monochrome and concentric: he would limit his emotions: he would achieve a pattern rather than an arabesque. I suggested that so artificial a system of detachment might in itself be limiting. He was unexpectedly sensible about it all: he said that he realised that his system could only be an experiment, that even if successful it might be suitable only for himself. But he was quite determined. And ten months later, in July of 1914, he published 'Lay Figures,' which, with his book of war poems, places him in a perfectly definite position. There is something very mean in me which resents this position. I am not myself very convinced by it. But it is recognised by people whose judgment I am honestly quite unable to ignore.

6

At moments, in the roar and rattle of the early stages of the war, I would reflect a little grimly on the collapse of Lambert's symmetry, on those cobweb time-tables swept aside unnoticed in the onrush of the maddened beast. He sent me a copy of 'Lay Figures' which reached me in the early days of August and which remained unopened for many years. Until the spring of 1916 he stayed at Paris, justifying his existence by a little hospital-work, writing those poems which figure as 'mes hôpitaux' in his war volume. And then in March he crossed over to England and joined the army. He came to see me before he left for France. He did not look as odd in his uniform as I had expected: he talked voraciously about the new movements in French literature and in a way which I failed entirely to understand: of his training down at Salisbury he said little, giggling feebly when I asked him about it, telling me 'not to be morbid' when I pressed for details. I could see no signs of any alteration in his physique: a little fatter in the face, perhaps, a little more fleshy round the jaw; but he still wilted, and his walk was as self-conscious as ever. I asked him if he was afraid of Flanders, whether the prospect of the trenches alarmed him as much as it alarmed me. He said that he dreaded the rats, and was afraid of mines. 'You see,' he said, 'it is the evitable or the wholly unexpected that is horrible. The rest is largely mechanical. It becomes a question of masochism. I certainly shall not mind the rest.' I thought at the time he was being optimistic, but I have since met a man in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company who was with Lambert both in France and Mesopotamia. 'Oh, no,' this man said to me, 'he was a quiet sort of fellow, Orme. And he had a violent temper. But he was rather a good regimental officer: he put up a good show, I remember, at Sheikh Sa'ad. A very good show. We liked him on the whole.'

Sheikh Sa'ad and Magdalen, that Coromandel cabinet, those bleached and ochre flats — Lambert himself would have savoured these contrasts: it was the sort of thing by which his rather dulled sense of humour would have been aroused. Was it aroused, I wondered, as he lay in the hospital ship at Basrah dying of dysentery? I like to think that it may perhaps have been aroused. He had dignity and courage: I expect he giggled slightly when they told him that he was unlikely to survive.

I heard of his death as I was running, late from luncheon, down the Duke of York's steps. I met a man coming up the steps who had been at Oxford with us. 'You have heard,' he said, 'that Orme has died in Mesopotamia?' I walked on towards the Foreign Office feeling very unheroic, very small. I had no sense, at the moment, of wastage — that sorrow which oppresses us to-day when we think back upon the war. I had no sense of pity even, feeling, as I have said, that so startling an incongruity would have illumined Lambert's courage with a spasm of amusement. I merely felt exhausted by this further appeal to the emotions: a sense of blank despair that such announcements should have ceased to evoke any creditable emotional response: a sense of the injustice of my sheltered lot: a sense of numbed dissatisfaction: a revolting sense of relief that it hadn't been me.

7

In the summer of 1925 I went to a party in Bloomsbury. I went with much diffidence, alarmed at entering the Areopagus of British culture. They treated me with distant but not unfriendly courtesy. The fact that, through no fault of my own, I was in evening dress increased the gulf between us. I sidled to the back of the room, hoping to remain unobserved. There was a curious picture on the wall which I studied attentively, trying to extract some meaning from its doubtless significant contours. My host came up to me. 'What,' I asked, 'is that supposed to represent?' Had I been less unstrung I should not, of course, have asked that question. My host winced slightly and moved away. I turned towards the bookshelves, searching in vain for the friendly bindings of one of mine own books. They were all talking about a sculptor called Brancousi. I pulled out a copy of Hugh Faussett's 'Tennyson' and began to read. An untidy man came up to me and glanced over my shoulder. He had eyes of great kindness and penetration, and he adopted towards me a manner which suggested that I either had said, or was about to say, something extremely interesting. I asked him whether he had read the book and he answered that he had, and that he felt it was so far more intelligent than the other one that had been published simultaneously. I agreed that it was, it was. He then moved away, and I put the book back tidily in its place. On the shelf above it were some volumes of poetry, and among them Lambert Orme's 'Lay Figures' which I had never read. I opened it with suddenly awakened interest, and began to turn the pages. My eye was arrested by a heading: 'Constantinople: April, 1912.' I sat down on the floor at that, and began to read. 'Thera' I read:

'Thera, if it indeed be you
That are Santorin,
There wander in,
The furtive steamers of the Khedivial Mail Company,
Rusted, barnacled,
And from the bridge the second officer
Shouts demotic to the Company's agent
Bobbing alpaca in a shore boat.

'Thera, if it indeed be you,
That are Santorin,
You will fully understand
This my cleansing —
At which he leant forward and pulled a rope towards him,
And the yacht sidled cross-ways,
At an angle,
"That," he said (he was a man of obtuse sensibilities)
"Is Bebek."'

It went on like this through several stanzas, and conveyed in its final effect a not unconvincing picture of the poet sailing somewhat absent-mindedly up the Bosphorus in a little white boat, accompanied, as he so often repeated, by a man of obtuse sensibilities. I was a little wounded by this posthumous revelation, and put the book down for a moment while I thought. After all, I thought, Lambert didn't come. If he had come he mightn't have found me in the least obtuse. I should never have said 'That is Bebek.' I should have waited till he asked. And surely, coming back at sunset, and I so silent — surely if he *had* come, the poem would have been a little less personal. My host was searching in the bookcase behind me, and the rest of the room were in suspense about something, evidently waiting for him to illustrate his discourse. 'I know,' he said, 'it's here somewhere — I was only reading it last night. They want to do a new edition of both books together — both "Lay

Figures" and the "War Poems."' I held the book up to him and he took it from me, a little curtly perhaps, anxious to regain his seat and to continue the discussion. 'You see,' he continued, 'there is no doubt that Orme was a real pioneer in his way. Of course his stuff was crude enough and he had little sense of balance. But take this, for instance ——' He began to turn the pages. 'Yes. Here it is. Now this is written in 1912. It describes him sailing up the river at Constantinople with some local bore: there's really something in it. There really is.' At this he adjusted the light behind him, jerked himself back into his cushion, and began. 'Thera,' he began,

'Thera, if it indeed be you
That are Santorin...'

He read the whole poem, and when it was finished they made him read it again. They then discussed the thing with appreciation, but with that avoidance of superlatives which so distinguishes their culture. The untidy man leant forward and knocked his pipe against the grate. 'Yes, there is no doubt,' he said, 'that Orme, had he lived, would have been important. It is a pity in a way. He must have been an interesting man. Did you ever meet him?' He was addressing my host: he was not addressing me.

'No,' my host answered; 'he lived in Paris I believe. I've never met anyone who knew him.'

The lady, whom, from a distance, I had so much admired, was sitting in the chair in front of me. She turned round and, for the first time, spoke to me. 'Mr. Nicholls,' she said, 'would you mind opening one of the windows? It is getting hot in here.'

I did as I was told.

THE RIVER GOD[1]

Roland Pertwee

When I was a little boy I had a friend who was a colonel. He was not the kind of colonel you meet nowadays, who manages a motor showroom in the West End of London and wears crocodile shoes and a small mustache and who calls you 'old man' and slaps your back, independent of the fact that you may have been no more than a private in the war. My colonel was of the older order that takes a third of a century and a lot of Indian sun and Madras curry in the making. A veteran of the Mutiny he was, and wore side whiskers to prove it. Once he came upon a number of Sepoys conspiring mischief in a byre with a barrel of gunpowder. So he put the butt of his cheroot into the barrel and presently they all went to hell. That was the kind of man he was in the way of business.

In the way of pleasure he was very different. In the way of pleasure he wore an old Norfolk coat that smelt of heather and brine, and which had no elbows to speak of. And he wore a Sherlock Holmesy kind of cap with a swarm of salmon flies upon it, that to my boyish fancy was more splendid than a crown. I cannot remember his legs, because they were nearly always under water, hidden in great canvas waders. But once he sent me a photograph of himself riding on a tricycle, so I expect he had some knickerbockers, too, which would have been that tight kind, with box cloth under the knees. Boys don't take much stock of clothes. His head occupied my imagination. A big, brave, white-haired head with cherry-red rugose cheeks and honest, laughing, puckered eyes, with gunpowder marks in their corners.

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People at the little Welsh fishing inn where we met said he was a bore; but I knew him to be a god and shall prove it.

I was ten years old and his best friend.

He was seventy something and my hero.

Properly I should not have mentioned my hero so soon in this narrative. He belongs to a later epoch, but sometimes it is forgivable to start with a boast, and now that I have committed myself I lack the courage to call upon my colonel to fall back two paces to the rear, quick march, and wait until he is wanted.

The real beginning takes place, as I remember, somewhere in Hampshire on the Grayshott Road, among sandy banks, sentinel firs and plum-colored wastes of heather. Summer-holiday time it was, and I was among folks whose names have since vanished like lizards under the stones of forgetfulness. Perhaps it was a picnic walk; perhaps I carried a basket and was told not to swing it for fear of bursting its cargo of ginger beer. In those days ginger beer had big bulgy corks held down with a string. In a hot sun or under stress of too much agitation the string would break and the corks fly. Then there would be a merry foaming fountain and someone would get reproached.

One of our company had a fishing rod. He was a young man who, one day, was to be an uncle of mine. But that didn't concern me. What concerned me was the fishing rod and presently — perhaps because he felt he must keep in with the family — he let me carry it. To the fisherman born there is nothing so provoking of curiosity as a fishing rod in a case.

Surreptitiously I opened the flap, which contained a small grass spear in a wee pocket, and, pulling down the case a little, I admired the beauties of the cork butt, with its gun-metal ferrule and reel rings and the exquisite frail slenderness of the two top joints.

'It's got two top joints — two!' I exclaimed ecstatically.

'Of course,' said he. 'All good trout rods have two.'

I marveled in silence at what seemed to me then a combination of extravagance and excellent precaution.

There must have been something inherently understanding and noble about that young man who would one day be my uncle, for, taking me by the arm, he sat me down on a tuft of heather and took the pieces of rod from the case and fitted them together. The rest of the company moved on and left me in Paradise.

It is thirty-five years ago since that moment and not one detail of it is forgotten. There sounds in my ears today as clearly as then, the faint, clear pop made by the little cork stoppers with their boxwood tops as they were withdrawn. I remember how, before fitting the pieces together, he rubbed the ferrules against the side of his nose to prevent them sticking. I remember looking up the length of it through a tunnel of sneck rings to the eyelet at the end. Not until he had fixed a reel and passed a line through the rings did he put the lovely thing into my hand. So light it was, so firm, so persuasive; such a thing alive—a scepter. I could do no more than say 'Oo!' and again, 'Oo!'

'A thrill, ain't it?' said he.

I had no need to answer that. In my new-found rapture was only one sorrow — the knowledge that such happiness would not endure and that, all too soon, a blank and rodless future awaited me.

'They must be awfully—awfully 'spensive,' I said.

'Couple of guineas,' he replied offhandedly.

A couple of guineas! And we were poor folk and the future was more rodless than ever.

'Then I shall save and save and save,' I said.

And my imagination started to add up twopence a week into guineas. Two hundred and forty pennies to the pound, multiplied by two — four hundred and eighty — and then another twenty-four pennies — five hundred and four. Why, it would take a lifetime, and no sweets, no elastic for catapults, no penny novelty boxes or air-gun bullets or ices or anything. Tragedy must have been writ large upon my face, for he said suddenly, 'When's your birthday?'

I was almost ashamed to tell him how soon it was. Perhaps he, too, was a little taken aback by its proximity, for that future uncle of mine was not so rich as uncles should be.

'We must see about it.'

'But it wouldn't — it couldn't be one like that,' I said.

I must have touched his pride, for he answered loftily, 'Certainly it will.'

In the fortnight that followed I walked on air and told everybody I had as good as got a couple-of-guineas rod.

No one can deceive a child, save the child himself, and when my birthday came and with it a long brown paper parcel, I knew, even before I had removed the wrappers, that this two-guinea rod was not worth the money. There was a brown linen case, it is true, but it was not a case with a neat compartment for each joint, nor was there a spear in the flap. There was only one top instead of two, and there were no popping little stoppers to protect the ferrules from dust and injury. The lower joint boasted no elegant cork hand piece, but was a tapered affair coarsely made and rudely varnished. When I fitted the pieces together, what I balanced in my hand was tough and stodgy, rather than limber. The reel, which had come in a different parcel, was of wood. It had neither check nor brake, and the line overran and backwound itself with distressing frequency.

I had not read and reread Gamages' price list without knowing something of rods, and I did not need to look long at this rod before realizing that it was no match to the one I had handled on the Grayshott Road.

I believe at first a great sadness possessed me, but very presently imagination came to the rescue. For I told myself that I had only to think that this was the rod of all other rods that I desired most and it would be so. And it was so.

Furthermore, I told myself that, in this great wide ignorant world, but few people existed with such expert knowledge of rods as I possessed. That I had but to say, 'Here is the final word in good rods,' and they would accept it as such.

Very confidently I tried the experiment on my mother, with inevitable success. From the depths of her affection and her ignorance on all such matters, she produced:

'It's a magnificent rod.'

I went my way, knowing full well that she knew not what she said, but that she was kind.

With rather less confidence I approached my father, saying, 'Look, father! It cost two guineas. It's absolutely the best sort you can get.'

And he, after waggling it a few moments in silence, quoted cryptically:

'There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.'

Young as I was, I had some curiosity about words, and on any other occasion I would have called on him to explain. But this I did not do, but left hurriedly, for fear that he should explain.

In the two years that followed, I fished every day in the slip of a back garden of our tiny London house. And, having regard to the fact that this rod was never fashioned to throw a fly, I acquired a pretty knack in the fullness of time and performed some glib casting at the nasturtiums and marigolds that flourished by the back wall.

My parents' fortunes must have been in the ascendant, I suppose, for I call to mind an unforgettable breakfast when my mother told me that father had decided we should spend our summer holiday at a Welsh hotel on the river Lledr. The place was called Pont-y-pant, and she showed me a picture of the hotel with a great knock-me-down river creaming past the front of it.

Although in my dreams I had heard fast water often enough, I had never seen it, and the knowledge that in a month's time I should wake with the music of a cataract in my ears was almost more than patience could endure.

In that exquisite, intolerable period of suspense I suffered as only childish longing and enthusiasm can suffer.

Even the hank of gut that I bought and bent into innumerable casts failed to alleviate that suffering. I would walk for miles for a moment's delight captured in gluing my nose to the windows of tackleists' shops in the West End. I learned from my grandmother — a wise and calm old lady — how to make nets and, having mastered the art, I made myself a landing net. This I set up on a frame fashioned from a penny schoolmaster's cane bound to an old walking stick. It would be pleasant to record that this was a good and serviceable net, but it was not. It flopped over in a very distressing fashion when called upon to lift the lightest weight. I had to confess to myself that I had more enthusiasm than skill in the manufacture of such articles.

At school there was a boy who had a fishing creel, which he swapped with me for a Swedish knife, a copy of Rogues of the Fiery Cross, and an Easter egg which I had kept on account of its rare beauty. He had forced a hard bargain and was sure he had the best of it, but I knew otherwise.

At last the great day dawned, and after infinite travel by train we reached our destination as the glow of sunset was graying into dark. The river was in spate, and as we crossed a tall stone bridge on our way to the hotel I heard it below me, barking and grumbling among great rocks. I was pretty far gone in tiredness, for I remember little else that night but a rod rack in the hall — a dozen rods of different sorts and sizes, with gaudy salmon flies, some nets, a gaff and an oak coffer upon which lay a freshly caught salmon on a blue ashet. Then supper by candlelight, bed, a glitter of stars through the open window, and the ceaseless drumming of water.

By six o'clock next morning I was on the river bank, fitting my rod together and watching in awe the great brown ribbon of water go fleetly by.

Among my most treasured possessions were half a dozen flies, and two of these I attached to the cast with exquisite care. While so engaged, a shadow fell on the grass beside me and, looking up, I beheld a lank, shabby individual with a walrus mustache and an unhealthy face, who, the night before, had helped with our luggage at the station.

'Water's too heavy for flies,' said he, with an uptilting inflection. 'This evening, yes; now, no — none whateffer. Better try with a worrum in the burrun.'

He pointed at a busy little brook which tumbled down the steep hillside and joined the main stream at the garden end.

'C-couldn't I fish with a fly in the — the burrun?' I asked, for although I wanted to catch a fish very badly, for honor's sake I would fain take it on a fly.

'Indeed, no,' he replied, slanting the tone of his voice skyward. 'You cootn't. Neffer. And that isn't a fly rot whateffer.'

'It is,' I replied hotly. 'Yes, it is.'

But he only shook his head and repeated, 'No,' and took the rod from my hand and illustrated its awkwardness and handed it back with a wretched laugh.

If he had pitched me into the river I should have been happier.

'It is a fly rod and it cost two guineas,' I said, and my lower lip trembled.

'Neffer,' he repeated. 'Five shillings would be too much.'

Even a small boy is entitled to some dignity.

Picking up my basket, I turned without another word and made for the hotel. Perhaps my eyes were blinded with tears, for I was about to plunge into the dark hall when a great, rough, kindly voice arrested me with:

'Easy does it.'

At the thick end of an immense salmon rod there strode out into the sunlight the noblest figure I had ever seen.

There is no real need to describe my colonel again — I have done so already — but the temptation is too great. Standing in the doorway, the sixteen-foot rod in hand, the deer-stalker hat, besprent with flies, crowning his shaggy head, the waders, like seven-league boots, braced up to his armpits, the creel across his shoulder, a gaff across his back, he looked what he was — a god. His eyes met mine with that kind of smile one good man keeps for another.

'An early start,' he said. 'Any luck, old fellar?'

I told him I hadn't started — not yet.

'Wise chap,' said he. 'Water's a bit heavy for trouting. It'll soon run down, though. Let's vet those flies of yours.'

He took my rod and whipped it expertly.

'A nice piece — new, eh?'

'N-not quite,' I stammered; 'but I haven't used it yet, sir, in water.'

That god read men's minds.

'I know — garden practice; capital; nothing like it.'

Releasing my cast, he frowned critically over the flies — a Blue Dun and a March Brown.

'Think so?' he queried. 'You don't think it's a shade late in the season for these fancies?' I said I thought perhaps it was. 'Yes, I think you're right,' said he. 'I believe in this big water you'd do better with a livelier pattern. Teal and Red, Cock-y-bundy, Greenwell's Glory.'

I said nothing, but nodded gravely at these brave names.

Once more he read my thoughts and saw through the wicker sides of my creel a great emptiness.

'I expect you've fished most in southern rivers. These Welsh trout have a fancy for a spot of color.'

He rummaged in the pocket of his Norfolk jacket and produced a round tin which once had held saddle soap.

'Collar on to that,' said he; 'there's a proper pickle of flies and casts in that tin that, as a keen fisherman, you won't mind sorting out. Still, they may come in useful.'

'But, I say, you don't mean ——' I began.

'Yes, go on; stick to it. All fishermen are members of the same club and I'm giving the trout a rest for a bit.' His eyes ranged the hills and trees opposite. 'I must be getting on with it before the sun's too high.'

Waving his free hand, he strode away and presently was lost to view at a bend in the road.

I think my mother was a little piqued by my abstraction during breakfast. My eyes never, for an instant, deserted the round tin box which lay open beside my plate. Within it were a paradise and a hundred miracles all tangled together in the pleasantest disorder. My mother said something about a lovely walk over the hills, but I had other plans, which included a very glorious hour which should be spent untangling and wrapping up in neat squares of paper my new treasures.

'I suppose he knows best what he wants to do,' she said.

So it came about that I was left alone and betook myself to a sheltered spot behind a rock where all the delicious disorder was remedied and I could take stock of what was mine.

I am sure there were at least six casts all set up with flies, and ever so many loose flies and one great stout, tapered cast, with a salmon fly upon it, that was so rich in splendor that I doubted if my benefactor could really have known that it was there.

I felt almost guilty at owning so much, and not until I had done full justice to everything did I fasten a new cast to my line and go a-fishing.

There is a lot said and written about beginner's luck, but none of it came my way. Indeed, I spent most of the morning extricating my line from the most fearsome tangles. I had no skill in throwing a cast with two droppers upon it and I found it was an art not to be learned in a minute. Then, from overeagerness, I was too snappy with my back cast, whereby, before many minutes had gone, I heard that warning crack behind me that betokens the loss of a tail fly. I must have spent half an hour searching the meadow for that lost fly and finding it not. Which is not strange, for I wonder has any fisherman ever found that lost fly. The reeds, the buttercups and the little people with many legs who run in the wet grass conspire together to keep the secret of its hiding place. I gave up at last, and with a feeling of shame that was only proper, I invested a new fly on the point of my cast and set to work again, but more warily.

In that hard racing water a good strain was put upon my rod, and before the morning was out it was creaking at the joints in a way that kept my heart continually in my mouth. It is the duty of a rod to work with a single smooth action and by no means to divide its performance into three sections of activity. It is a hard task for any angler to persuade his line austerely if his rod behaves thus.

When, at last, my father strolled up the river bank, walking, to his shame, much nearer the water than a good fisherman should, my nerves were jumpy from apprehension.

'Come along. Food's ready. Done any good?' said he.

Again it was to his discredit that he put food before sport, but I told him I had had a wonderful morning, and he was glad.

'What do you want to do this afternoon, old man?' he asked.

'Fish,' I said.

'But you can't always fish,' he said.

I told him I could, and I was right and have proved it for thirty years and more.

'Well, well,' he said, 'please yourself, but isn't it dull not catching anything?'

And I said, as I've said a thousand times since, 'As if it could be.'

So that afternoon I went downstream instead of up, and found myself in difficult country where the river boiled between the narrows of two hills. Stunted oaks overhung the water and great bowlders opposed its flow. Presently I came to a sort of natural flight of steps — a pool and a cascade three times repeated — and there, watching the maniac fury of the waters in awe and wonderment, I saw the most stirring sight in my young life. I saw a silver salmon leap superbly from the caldron below into the pool above. And I saw another and another salmon do likewise. And I wonder the eyes of me did not fall out of my head.

I cannot say how long I stayed watching that gallant pageant of leaping fish — in ecstasy there is no measurement of time — but at last it came upon me that all the salmon in the sea were careering past me and that if I were to realize my soul's desire I must hasten to the pool below before the last of them had gone by.

It was a mad adventure, for until I had discovered that stout cast, with the gaudy fly attached in the tin box, I had given no thought to such noble quarry. My recent possessions had put ideas into my head above my station and beyond my powers. Failure, however, means little to the young, and, walking fast, yet gingerly, for fear of breaking my rod top against a tree, I followed the path downstream until I came to a great basin of water into which, through a narrow throat, the river thundered like a storm.

At the head of the pool was a plate of rock scored by the nails of fishermen's boots, and here I sat me down to wait while the salmon cast, removed from its wrapper, was allowed to soak and soften in a puddle left by the rain.

And while I waited a salmon rolled not ten yards from where I sat. Head and tail, up and down he went, a great monster of a fish, sporting and deriding me.

With that performance so near at hand, I have often wondered how I was able to control my fingers well enough to tie a figure-eight knot between the line and the cast. But I did, and I'm proud to be able to record it. Your true-born angler does not go blindly to work until he has first satisfied his conscience. There is a pride, in knots, of which the laity knows nothing, and if, through neglect to tie them rightly, failure and loss should result, pride may not be restored nor conscience salved by the plea of eagerness. With my trembling fingers I bent the knot and, with a pummeling heart, launched the line into the broken water at the throat of the pool.

At first the mere tug of the water against that large fly was so thrilling to me that it was hard to believe that I had not hooked a whale. The trembling line swung round in a wide arc into a calm eddy below where I stood. Before casting afresh I shot a glance over my shoulder to assure myself there was no limb of a tree behind me to foul the fly. And this was a gallant cast, true and straight, with a couple of yards more length than its predecessor, and a wider radius. Instinctively I knew, as if the surface had been marked with an X where the salmon had risen, that my fly must pass right over the spot. As it swung by, my nerves were strained like piano wires. I think I knew that something tremendous, impossible, terrifying, was going to happen. The sense, the certitude was so strong in me that I half opened my mouth to shout a warning to the monster, not to.

I must have felt very, very young in that moment. I, who that same day had been talked to as a man by a man among men. The years were stripped from me and I was what I was — ten years old and appalled. And then, with the suddenness of a rocket, it happened. The water was cut into a swathe. I remember a silver loop bearing downward — a bright, shining, vanishing thing like the bobbin of my mother's sewing machine — and a tug. I shall never forget the viciousness of that tug. I had my fingers tight upon the line, so I got the full force of it. To counteract a tendency to go headfirst into the spinning water below, I threw myself backward and sat down on the hard rock with a jar that shut my teeth on my tongue — like the jaws of a trap.

Luckily I had let the rod go out straight with the line, else it must have snapped in the first frenzy of the downstream rush. Little ass that I was, I tried to check the speeding line with my forefinger, with the result that it cut and burnt me to the bone. There wasn't above twenty yards of line in the reel, and the wretched contrivance was trying to be rid of the line even faster than the fish was wrenching it out. Heaven knows why it didn't snarl, for great loops and whorls were whirling, like Catherine wheels, under my wrist. An instant's glance revealed the terrifying fact that there were not more than half a dozen yards left on the reel and the fish showed no sign of abating his rush. With the realization of impending and inevitable catastrophe upon me, I launched a yell for help, which, rising above the roar of the waters, went echoing down the gorge.

And then, to add to my terrors, the salmon leaped — a winging leap like a silver arch appearing and instantly disappearing upon the broken surface. So mighty, so all-powerful he seemed in that sublime moment that I lost all sense of reason and raised the rod, with a sudden jerk, above my head.

I have often wondered, had the rod actually been the two-guinea rod my imagination claimed for it, whether it could have withstood the strain thus violently and unreasonably imposed upon it. The wretched thing that I held so grimly never even put up a fight. It snapped at the ferrule of the lower joint and plunged like a toboggan down the slanting line, to vanish into the black depths of the water.

My horror at this calamity was so profound that I was lost even to the consciousness that the last of my line had run out. A couple of vicious tugs advised me of this awful truth. Then, snap! The line parted at the reel, flickered out through the rings and was gone. I was left with nothing but the butt of a broken rod in my hand and an agony of mind that even now I cannot recall without emotion.

I am not ashamed to confess that I cried. I lay down on the rock, with my cheek in the puddle where I had soaked the cast, and plenished it with my tears. For what had the future left for me but a cut and burning finger, a badly bumped behind, the single joint of a broken rod and no faith in uncles? How long I lay there weeping I do not know. Ages, perhaps, or minutes, or seconds.

I was roused by a rough hand on my shoulder and a kindly voice demanding, 'Hurt yourself, Ike Walton?'

Blinking away my tears, I pointed at my broken rod with a bleeding forefinger.

'Come! This is bad luck,' said my colonel, his face grave as a stone. 'How did it happen?'

'I c-caught a s-salmon.'

'You what?' said he.

'I d-did,' I said.

He looked at me long and earnestly; then, taking my injured hand, he looked at that and nodded.

'The poor groundlings who can find no better use for a river than something to put a bridge over think all fishermen are liars,' said he. 'But we know better, eh? By the bumps and breaks and cuts I'd say you made a plucky fight against heavy odds. Let's hear all about it.'

So, with his arm round my shoulders and his great shaggy head near to mine, I told him all about it.

At the end he gave me a mighty and comforting squeeze, and he said, 'The loss of one's first big fish is the heaviest loss I know. One feels, whatever happens, one'll never ——' He stopped and pointed dramatically. 'There it goes — see! Down there at the tail of the pool!'

In the broken water where the pool emptied itself into the shallows beyond, I saw the top joints of my rod dancing on the surface.

'Come on!' he shouted, and gripping my hand, jerked me to my feet. 'Scatter your legs! There's just a chance!'

Dragging me after him, we raced along by the river path to the end of the pool, where, on a narrow promontory of grass, his enormous salmon rod was lying.

'Now,' he said, picking it up and making the line whistle to and fro in the air with sublime authority, 'keep your eyes skinned on those shallows for another glimpse of it.'

A second later I was shouting, 'There! There!'

He must have seen the rod point at the same moment, for his line flowed out and the big fly hit the water with a plop not a couple of feet from the spot.

He let it ride on the current, playing it with a sensitive touch like the brushwork of an artist.

'Half a jiffy!' he exclaimed at last. 'Wait! Yes, I think so. Cut down to that rock and see if I haven't fished up the line.'

I needed no second invitation, and presently was yelling, 'Yes — yes, you have!'

'Stretch yourself out then and collar hold of it.'

With the most exquisite care he navigated the line to where I lay stretched upon the rock. Then:

'Right you are! Good lad! I'm coming down.'

Considering his age, he leaped the rocks like a chamois.

'Now,' he said, and took the wet line delicately between his forefinger and thumb. One end trailed limply downstream, but the other end seemed anchored in the big pool where I had had my unequal and disastrous contest.

Looking into his face, I saw a sudden light of excitement dancing in his eyes.

'Odd,' he muttered, 'but not impossible.'

'What isn't?' I asked breathlessly.

'Well, it looks to me as if the top joints of that rod of yours have gone downstream.'

Gingerly he pulled up the line, and presently an end with a broken knot appeared.

'The reel knot, eh?' I nodded gloomily. 'Then we lose the rod,' said he. That wasn't very heartening news. 'On the other hand, it's just possible the fish is still on — sulking.'

'Oo!' I exclaimed.

'Now, steady does it,' he warned, 'and give me my rod.'

Taking a pair of clippers from his pocket, he cut his own line just above the cast.

'Can you tie a knot?' he asked.

'Yes,' I nodded.

'Come on, then; bend your line onto mine. Quick as lightning.'

Under his critical eye, I joined the two lines with a blood knot. 'I guessed you were a fisherman,' he said, nodded approvingly and clipped off the ends. 'And now to know the best or the worst.'

I shall never forget the music of that check reel or the suspense with which I watched as, with the butt of the rod bearing against the hollow of his thigh, he steadily wound up the wet slack line. Every instant I expected it to come drifting downstream, but it didn't. Presently it rose in a tight slant from the pool above.

'Snagged, I'm afraid,' he said, and worked the rod with an easy straining motion to and fro. 'Yes, I'm afraid — no, by Lord Bobs, he's on!'

I think it was only right and proper that I should have launched a yell of triumph as, with the spoken word, the point at which the line cut the water shifted magically from the left side of the pool to the right.

'And a fish too,' said he.

In the fifteen minutes that followed, I must have experienced every known form of terror and delight.

'Youngster,' said he, 'you should be doing this, by rights, but I'm afraid the rod's a bit above your weight.'

'Oh, go on and catch him,' I pleaded.

'And so I will,' he promised; 'unship the gaff, young un, and stand by to use it, and if you break the cast we'll never speak to each other again, and that's a bet.'

But I didn't break the cast. The noble, courageous, indomitable example of my river god had lent me skill and precision beyond my years. When at long last a weary, beaten, silver monster rolled within reach of my arm into a shallow eddy, the steel gaff shot out fair and true, and sank home.

And then I was lying on the grass, with my arms round a salmon that weighed twenty-two pounds on the scale and contained every sort of happiness known to a boy.

And best of all, my river god shook hands with me and called me 'partner.'

That evening the salmon was placed upon the blue ashet in the hall, bearing a little card with its weight and my name upon it.

And I am afraid I sat on a chair facing it, for ever so long, so that I could hear what the other anglers had to say as they passed by. I was sitting there when my colonel put his head out of his private sitting room and beckoned me to come in.

'A true fisherman lives in the future, not the past, old man,' said he; 'though, for this once, it 'ud be a shame to reproach you.'

I suppose I colored guiltily — at any rate, I hope so.

'We got the fish,' said he, 'but we lost the rod, and the future without a rod doesn't bear thinking of. Now' — and he pointed at a long wooden box on the floor, that overflowed with rods of different sorts and sizes — 'rummage among those. Take your time and see if you can find anything to suit you.'

'But do you mean — can I ——'

'We're partners, aren't we? And p'r'aps as such you'd rather we went through our stock together.'

'Oo, sir,' I said.

'Here, quit that,' he ordered gruffly. 'By Lord Bobs, if a show like this afternoon's don't deserve a medal, what does? Now, here's a handy piece by Hardy — a light and useful tool — or if you fancy greenheart in preference to split bamboo ——'

I have the rod to this day, and I count it among my dearest treasures. And to this day I have a flick of the wrist that was his legacy. I have, too, some small skill in dressing flies, the elements of which were learned in his company by candlelight after the day's work was over. And I have countless memories of that month-long, month-short friendship — the closest and most perfect friendship, perhaps, of all my life.

He came to the station and saw me off. How I vividly remember his shaggy head at the window, with the whiskered cheeks and the gunpowder marks at the corners of his eyes! I didn't cry, although I wanted to awfully. We were partners and shook hands. I never saw him again, although on my birthdays I would have colored cards from him, with Irish, Scotch, Norwegian postmarks. Very brief they were: 'Water very low.' 'Took a good fish last Thursday.' 'Been prawning, but don't like it.'

Sometimes at Christmas I had gifts — a reel, a tapered line, a fly book. But I never saw him again.

Came at last no more post cards or gifts, but in the Fishing Gazette, of which I was a religious reader, was an obituary telling how one of the last of the Mutiny veterans had joined the great majority. It seems he had been fishing half an hour before he died. He had taken his rod down and passed out. They had buried him at Totnes, overlooking the River Dart.

So he was no more — my river god — and what was left of him they had put into a box and buried it in the earth.

But that isn't true; nor is it true that I never saw him again. For I seldom go a-fishing but that I meet him on the river banks.

The banks of a river are frequented by a strange company and are full of mysterious and murmurous sounds — the cluck and laughter of water, the piping of birds, the hum of insects and the whispering of wind in the willows. What should prevent a man in such a place having a word and speech with another who is not there? So much of fishing lies in imagination, and mine needs little stretching to give my river god a living form.

'With this ripple,' says he, 'you should do well.'

'And what's it to be,' say I — 'Blue Upright, Red Spinner? What's your fancy, sir?'

Spirits never grow old. He has begun to take an interest in dry-fly methods — that river god of mine, with his seven-league boots, his shaggy head and the gaff across his back.

BLOOD-MONEY[1]

RAFAEL SABATINI

CAPTAIN BLOOD was pleased with the world; which is but another way of saying that he was pleased with himself.

He stood on the Mole at Cayona and surveyed the shipping in the rock-bound harbour. With pride he considered the five great ships that now made up his fleet, every spar and timber of which had once been the property of Spain. There was his own flagship, the Arabella, of forty guns, that once had been the Cinco Llagas, out of Cadiz, with her red bulwarks and gilded ports aflame in the evening sunlight, with the scarcely less powerful blue and white Elizabeth beside her. Beyond them rode the three smaller twenty-gun vessels captured in the great affair at Maracaybo from which Blood was lately returned. These ships, originally named the Infanta, the San Felipe, the Santo Niño, Blood had renamed after the three Parcae, the Clotho, the Lachesis, and the Atropos, by which it was his intention playfully to convey that they were the arbiters of the fate of any Spaniard henceforth encountered by them upon the seas.

Captain Blood took satisfaction in his own delicate, scholarly humour. He was, as I have said, well pleased

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with himself. His following numbered close upon a thousand men, and he could double this number whenever he pleased. For his luck was passing into a proverb, and luck is the highest quality that can be sought in a leader of hazardous enterprises. Not the great Henry Morgan himself in his best days had wielded such authority and power. Not even Montbar—surnamed by Spain the Exterminator — had been more dreaded by Spaniards in his day than was Don Pedro Sangre, as they translated Peter Blood's name, accounting it most apt.

Order, he knew, was being taken against him. Not only the King of Spain, of whose power he had made a mock, but also the King of England, whom he accounted, and with some reason, a contemptible fellow, were concerting measures for his destruction; and news had lately come to Tortuga that, nearer at hand, the Spanish Admiral, Don Miguel de Espinosa, who had been the latest and most terrible sufferer at his hands, had proclaimed that he would pay ten thousand pieces of eight to any man who should deliver up to him the person of Captain Blood, alive. Don Miguel's was a vindictiveness that was not to be satisfied by mere death.

Peter Blood was not intimidated, nor on that account was he likely to mistrust his luck so much as to let himself run to rust in the security of Tortuga. For that which he had suffered — and he had suffered much — at the hands of man, he had chosen to make Spain the scapegoat.

Thus he accounted that he served a twofold purpose. He took compensation, and at the same time served, not indeed the Stuart King, whom he despised — although himself born an Irishman and bred a Papist — but England, and, for that matter, all the rest of civilised mankind, which cruel, treacherous, greedy, bigoted Castile sought to debar from intercourse with the New World.

He was turning from the Mole, almost deserted by now of its usual bustling heterogeneous crowd when the voice of Hayton, the boatswain of the Arabella, called after him from the boat that had brought him ashore.

'Back at eight bells, captain?'

'At eight bells,' said Blood, over his shoulder, and sauntered on, swinging his long ebony cane, elegant and courtly in a suit of gray and silver.

He took his way up towards the town, saluted as he went by most of those whom he met, and stared at by the rest. He chose to go by way of the wide, unpaved Rue du Roi de France, which the townsfolk had sought to embellish by flanking it with rows of palm trees. As he approached the tavern of the King of France the little crowd about its portals drew to attention. From within came a steady drone of voices as a muffled accompaniment to foul exclamations, snatches of coarse songs and the shrill, foolish laughter of women. Through all ran the rattle of dice and the clinking of drinking-cans.

Blood realised that his buccaneers were making merry with the gold they had brought back from Maracaybo. The ruffians overflowing from that house of infamy hailed him with a ringing cheer. Was he not the king of all the ruffians that made up the great Brotherhood of the Coast?

He acknowledged their greeting by a lift of the hand that held the cane, and passed on. He had business with M. d'Ogeron, the governor, and this business took him now to the handsome white house crowning the eminence to the east of the town.

The captain was an orderly provident man, and he was busily providing against the day when the death or downfall of King James II might make it possible for him to return home. For some time now it had been his practice to make over the bulk of his share of prizes to the governor against bills of exchange on France, which he forwarded to Paris for collection and deposit. Peter Blood was ever a welcome visitor at the governor's house, not only because these transactions were profitable to M. d'Ogeron, but in a still deeper measure because of a signal service that the captain had once done him and his in rescuing his daughter Madeleine from the hands of a ruffianly pirate who had attempted to carry her off. By M. d'Ogeron, his son and his two daughters, Captain Blood had ever since been regarded as something more than an ordinary friend.

It was therefore nowise extraordinary that when, his business being transacted, he was departing on this particular evening, Mademoiselle d'Ogeron should choose to escort Captain Blood down the short avenue of her father's fragrant garden.

A pale-faced, black-haired beauty, tall and statuesque of figure, and richly gowned in the latest mode of France, Mademoiselle d'Ogeron was as romantic of appearance as of temperament. And as she stepped gracefully beside the captain in the gathering dusk, she showed her purpose to be not without a certain romantic quality also.

'Monsieur,' she said in French, hesitating a little, 'I have come to implore you to be ever on your guard. You have too many enemies.'

He halted and half-turning, hat in hand, he bowed untill his long black ringlets almost met across his clear-cut, gipsy-tinted face.

'Mademoiselle, your concern is flattering; but so flattering.' Erect again, his bold eyes, so startlingly light under their black brows and in a face so burnt and swarthy, laughed into her own. 'I do not want for enemies, true. It is the penalty of greatness. Only he who is without anything is without enemies. But at least they are not in Tortuga.'

'Are you so very sure of that?'

Her tone gave him pause. He frowned, and considered her solemnly for an instant before replying.

'Mademoiselle, you speak as if from some knowledge.'

'Hardly so much. My knowledge is but the knowledge of what a slave told me to-day. He says that the Spanish Admiral has placed a price upon your head.'

'That is just the Spanish Admiral's notion of flattery, mademoiselle.'

'And that Cahusac has been heard to say he will make you rue the wrong you did him at Maracaybo.'

'Cahusac?'

The name revealed to him the rashness of his assertion that he had no enemy in Tortuga. He had forgotten Cahusac: but he realized that Cahusac would not be likely to have forgotten him. Cahusac had been with him at Maracaybo, and had been trapped with him there by the arrival of Don Miguel de Espinosa's fleet. The French rover had taken fright, had charged Blood with rashness in his conduct of the enterprise, had quarrelled with him and had made terms with the Spanish Admiral for himself and his own French contingent. Granted a safe-conduct by Don Miguel, he had departed empty-handed, leaving Captain Blood to his fate. But it proved not at all as the timorous Cahusac conceived it. Captain Blood had not only broken out of the Spanish trap, but he had solely mauled the Admiral, captured three of his ships, and returned to Tortuga laden with rich spoils of victory.

To Cahusac this was gall and wormwood. With the faculty for confusing cause and effect which is the chief disability of stupid egoists, he came to account himself cheated by Captain Blood. And he was making no secret of his unfounded resentment.

'He is saying that, is he?' said Captain Blood. 'Now that is indiscreet of him. Besides, all the world knows he was not wronged. He was allowed to depart in safety as he wished when he thought the situation grew too dangerous.'

'But by doing so he sacrificed his share of the prizes, and for that he and his companions have since been the mock of Tortuga. Can you not conceive what must be that ruffian's feelings?'

They had reached the gate.

'You will take precautions? You will guard yourself?' she begged him.

He smiled upon her friendly anxiety.

'If only so that I may live on to serve you.' With formal courtesy he bowed low over her hand and kissed it.

Seriously concerned, however, by her warning he was not. That Cahusac should be vindictive he could well believe. But that Cahusac should utter threats here in Tortuga was an indiscretion too dangerous to be credible in the case of a cur who took no risks.

He stepped out briskly through the night that was closing down, soft and warm, and came soon within sight of the lights of the Rue du Roi de France. As he reached the head of that now deserted thoroughfare, a shadow detached itself from the mouth of a lane on his right to intercept him.

Even as he checked, prepared to fall on guard, he made out the figure to be a woman's, and heard his name called softly in a woman's voice.

'Captain Blood!'

As he halted she came closer, and addressed him quickly, breathlessly. 'I saw you pass two hours since. But I durstn't be seen speaking to you in daylight here in the street. So I have been on the watch for your return. Don't go on, captain. You are walking into danger; walking to your death.'

At last his puzzled mind recognised her. And before the eyes of his memory flashed a scene enacted a week ago at the King of France. Two drunken ruffians had quarrelled over a woman — a fragment of the human wreckage of Europe washed up on the shores of the New World — an unfortunate creature of a certain comeliness, which, however, like the cast-off finery she wore, was tarnished, soiled and crumpled. The woman, arrogating a voice in a dispute of which she was the object, was brutally struck by one of her companions, and Blood, upon an impulse of chivalrous anger, had felled her assailant, and escorted her from the place.

'They're lying in wait for you down yonder,' she was saying, 'and they mean to kill you.'

'Who does?' he asked her, Mademoiselle d'Ogeron's words of warning sharply recalled.

'There's a score of them. And if they was to know — if they was to see me here a-warning you — my own throat would be cut before morning.'

She peered fearfully about her through the gloom as she spoke, and fear quivered in her voice. Then she cried out huskily, as if with mounting terror.

'Oh, don't let us stand here! Come with me, I'll make you safe until daylight. Then you can go back to your ship, and if you're wise you'll stay on board after this, or else come ashore in company. Come!' she ended, and caught him by the sleeve.

'Whisht now! Whisht!' said he, resisting the pressure on his arm. 'Whither will you be taking me?'

'Oh, what odds, so long as I make you safe?' She was dragging on him with all her weight. 'You was kind to me, and I can't leave you to be killed. And we'll both be murdered unless you come.'

Yielding at last, as much for her sake as his own, he allowed her to lead him from the wide street into the byway from which she had issued to intercept him. It was a narrow lane with little one-storied houses that were mostly timber standing at wide intervals along one side of it. Along the other ran a palisade enclosing a plantation.

At the second house she stopped. The little door stood open, and the interior was dimly lighted by the naked flame of a brass oil lamp set upon a table.

'Go in,' she bade him in a shuddering whisper.

Two steps led down to the floor of the house, which was below the level of the street. Down these went Captain Blood, and on into the room, whose air was rank with the reek of stale tobacco and the sickly odour of the little oil lamp. The woman followed, and closed the door. And then before Captain Blood could turn to inspect his surroundings in that dim light, he was struck over the head from behind with something heavy and hard-driven, which, if it did not stun him outright, at least stretched him sick and faint upon the grimy, naked earth of the unpaved floor.

At the same moment a woman's scream, that ended abruptly in a stifled gurgle, cut sharply upon the silence.

In an instant, before Captain Blood could move to help himself, before he could even recover from his bewildered surprise, swift, sinewy, skilful hands had done their work upon him. Thongs of hide lashed his ankles and his wrists which had been dragged behind him. Then he was rolled over on to his back, lifted, forced into a chair, and lashed by the waist to that.

A man of low stature and powerful, ape-like build, long in the body and short in the legs, was leaning over him. The sleeves of his blue shirt were rolled to the elbows of his prodigious, long, muscular and hairy arms. Little black eyes twinkled wickedly in a broad face that was almost as flat and sallow as a mulatto's. A red and blue scarf swathed his head, completely concealing his hair; heavy gold rings hung in the lobes of the great ears.

Captain Blood considered him for a long moment, setting a curb upon the violent rage that rose in him in a measure as his senses cleared. Instinctively he realised that violence and passion would help him not at all, and that at all costs they must be suppressed. And he suppressed them.

'Cahusac!' he said slowly. And then added. 'This is an unexpected pleasure entirely!'

'Ye've dropped anchor at last, captain,' said Cahusac, and he laughed softly with infinite malice.

Blood looked beyond him towards the door, where the woman was writhing in the grasp of Cahusac's companion.

'Will you be quiet, you slut, or must I quiet you?' the ruffian was threatening.

'What are you going to do with him, Sam?' she whimpered.

'No business of yours, my girl.'

'Oh, yes it is! You told me he was in danger, and I believed you, you lying tyke!'

'Well, so he was. But he's safe and snug now. You go in there, Molly.' He pointed across the room to the black entrance of an alcove.

'I'll not...' she was beginning angrily.

'Go on,' he snarled, 'or it'll be the worse for you.'

He seized her roughly again at neck and waist and thrust her, still resisting, across the room and into the alcove. He closed the door and bolted it.

'Stay you there, you slut, and keep quiet, or I'll quiet you once for all.'

From behind the door he was answered by a moan. Then there was the creak of a bed as the woman flung herself violently upon it, and thereafter silence.

Captain Blood accounted her part in this business explained, and more or less ended. He looked up into the face of his sometime associate, and his lips smiled to simulate a calm he was far from feeling.

'Would it be an impertinence to inquire what ye're intending, Cahusac?' said he.

Cahusac's companion laughed, and lounged across the table, a tall, loose-limbed fellow, with a long face of an almost Indian cast of features. His dress implied the hunter. He answered for Cahusac, who glowered, morosely silent.

'We intend to hand you over to Don Miguel de Espinosa.'

He stooped to give his attention to the lamp, pulling up the wick and trimming it, so that the light in the shabby little room was suddenly increased.

'C'est ça!' said Cahusac. 'And Don Miguel, no doubt, he'll intend to hang you from the yardarm.'

'So Don Miguel's in this, is he? Glory be! I suppose it's the blood-money that's tempted ye. Sure now, it's the very work that ye're fitted for, devil a doubt. But have ye considered all? There are reefs ahead, my lad. Hayton was to have met me with a boat at the mole at eight bells. I'm late as it is. Eight bells was made an hour ago and more. Presently they'll take alarm. They knew where I was going. They'll follow and track me. To find me, the boys will be turning Tortuga inside out like a sack. And what'll happen to ye then, Cahusac? Have you thought of that? The pity of it is that ye're entirely without foresight. It was lack of foresight that sent ye away empty-handed from Maracaybo. And even then, but for me, ye'd be hauling at the oar of a Spanish galley this very minute. Yet ye're aggrieved, being a poor-spirited, cross-grained cur, and to vent your spite you're running straight upon destruction. If ye've a spark of sense you'll haul in sail, my lad, and heave-to, before it's too late.'

Cahusac leered at him for only answer, and then in silence went through the captain's pockets. The other, meanwhile, sat down on a three-legged stool of pine.

'What's o'clock, Cahusac?' he asked.

Cahusac consulted the captain's watch.

'Near half-past nine, Sam.'

'Plague on it,' grumbled Sam. 'Three hours to wait!'

'There's a dice in the cupboard,' said Cahusac, 'and here's something to be played for.'

He jerked his thumb towards the yield of Captain Blood's pockets, which made a little pile upon the table. There were some twenty gold pieces, a little silver, an onion-shaped gold watch, a gold tobacco-box, a pistol, and lastly, a jewel which Cahusac had detached from the lace at the captain's throat, besides a sword and rich balrick of gray leather heavily wrought in gold.

Sam rose, went to a cupboard, and fetched thence the dice. He set them on the table, and drawing up his stool, again resumed his seat. The money he divided into two equal halves. Then he added the sword and the watch to one pile, and the jewel, the pistol and the tobacco-box to the other.

Blood, very alert and watchful — so concentrated indeed, upon the problem of winning free from this trap that he was hardly conscious of the pain in his head from the blow that had felled him — began to speak again. Resolutely he refused to admit the fear and hopelessness that were knocking at his heart.

'There's another thing ye've not considered,' said he slowly, almost drawlingly, 'and that is that I might be willing to ransom myself at a far more handsome price than the Spanish Admiral has offered for me.'

But they weren't impressed. Cahusac merely mocked him.

'Tiens! And your certainty that Hayton will come to your rescue then? What of that?'

He laughed, and Sam laughed with him.

'It's probable,' said Blood, 'most probable. But not certain; nothing is, in this uncertain world. Not even that the Spaniard will pay you the ten thousand pieces of eight they tell me he has been after offering for me. You could make a better bargain with me, Cahusac.'

He paused, and his keen, watchful glance observed the sudden gleam of covetousness in the Frenchman's eye, as well as the frown contracting the brow of the other ruffian. Therefore he continued.

'You might make such a bargain as would compensate you for what you missed at Maracaybo. For every thousand pieces that the Spaniard offers, sure now I'll offer two.'

Cahusac's jaw fell, his eyes widened.

'Twenty thousand pieces,' he gasped in blank amazement.

And then Sam's great fist crashed down upon the rickety table, and he swore foully and fiercely.

'None of that,' he roared. 'I've made my bargain, and I abides by it. It'll be the worse for me if I doesn't; ay, and for you, Cahusac. Besides, are you such a gull that you think this pretty hawk'll keep faith with you?'

'He knows that I would,' said Blood, 'he's sailed with me. He knows that my word is accounted good even by Spaniards.'

'Maybe. But it's not accounted good by me.' Sam stood over him, the long, evil face, with its sloping brows and heavy eyelids, grown dark and menacing. 'I'm pledged to deliver you safely at midnight, and when I pledges myself to a job I does it. Understand?'

Captain Blood looked up at him, and actually smiled.

'Faith,' said he. 'You don't leave much to a man's imagination.'

And he meant it literally; for what he had clearly gathered was that it was Sam who had entered into league with the Spanish agents, and dared not for his life's sake break with them.

'Then that's as well,' Sam assured him. 'If you want to be spared the discomfort of a gag for the next three hours, you'll just hold your plaguey tongue. Understand that?'

He thrust his long face forward into his captive's, sneering and menacing.

Understanding, Captain Blood abandoned his desperate clutch of the only slender straw of hope that he had discovered in the situation. He realized that he was to wait here, helpless in his bonds, until the time appointed for his delivery to someone who should carry him off to Don Miguel de Espinosa. Upon what would happen to him then he scarcely dared to dwell. He knew the revolting cruelties of which a Spaniard was capable, and he could guess what a spur of rage would be the Spanish admiral's. A sweat of horror broke upon his skin. Was he indeed to end his gloriously hazardous career in this mean way? Was he, who had so proudly sailed the seas of the Main as a conqueror, to founder thus in a dirty backwater? He could found no hope upon the search that Hayton and the others would presently be making. That, as he had said, they would turn the place inside out, he never doubted. But he never doubted, either, that they would come too late. They might hunt down his betrayers, and wreak a terrible vengeance upon them. But how should that avail him?

The fogs of passion thickened in his mind; despair smothered the power of thought. He had close upon a thousand devoted men here in Tortuga, almost within hail, and he bound and helpless, and so to be delivered to the vindictive justice of Castile! That insistent, ever-recurring thought beat backwards and forwards like a pendulum in his brain, distracting it.

And then, in a sense, he came to himself again. His mind grew clear once more, preternaturally clear and active. Cahusac he knew for a venal scoundrel, who would keep faith with none if he saw profit in treachery. And the other was probably no better; indeed, probably worse, since interest alone — that Spanish blood-money — had lured him to his present task. He concluded that he had too soon abandoned the attempt to outbid the Spanish admiral. That way he might yet throw a bone of contention to these mangy curs, over which they would perhaps end by tearing at each other's throats.

A moment he surveyed them now, observing the evil greed in the eyes of each as they watched the fall of the dice over their trifling stakes from the gold and trinkets of which they had rifled him, and over which they were gaming to beguile the time of waiting.

And then he heard his own crisp voice breaking the silence.

'You gamble there for halfpence with a fortune within your reach.'

'Are you beginning again?' growled Sam.

But the captain went on undaunted.

'I'll outbid the Spanish admiral's blood-money by forty thousand pieces. I offer you fifty thousand pieces of eight for my life.'

Sam, who had risen in anger, stood suddenly arrested by the mention of so vast a sum.

Cahusac had risen too, and now both men stood, one on each side of the table, tense with excitement, which, if unexpressed as yet, was none the less to be read in the sudden pallor of their faces and dilation of their eyes. At last the Frenchman broke the silence.

'*God of God!* Fifty thousand pieces of eight!' He uttered the words slowly, as if to impress the figure upon his own and his companion's mind. And he repeated. 'Fifty thousand pieces of eight! Twenty-five thousand for each! Pardi, but that is worth some risk! Eh, Sam?'

'A mort of money, true,' said Sam thoughtfully. And then he recovered. 'Bah! What's a promise, anyhow? Who's to trust him? Once he's free, who's to make him pay, and he's...'

'Oh, I pay,' said Blood. 'Cahusac will tell you that I always pay.' And he continued. 'Consider that such a sum, even when divided, will make each of you wealthy, to lead a life of ease and plenty. Mucho viño, muchas mugeres!' he laughed in Spanish. 'To be sure now, you'll be wise.'

Cahusac licked his lips and looked at his companion. 'It could be done,' he muttered persuasively. 'It's not yet ten, and between this and midnight we could put ourselves beyond the reach of your Spanish friends.'

But Sam was not to be persuaded. He had been thinking; yet tempting as he must find the lure, he dared not yield, discerning a double peril within it. Committed now by Spain to this venture, he dared neither draw back nor shift his course. Between the certain rage of the Spaniards should he play them false, and the probable resentment of Blood once he was restored to liberty, Sam saw himself inevitably crushed. Better an assured five thousand pieces to be enjoyed in comparative safety than a possible twenty-five thousand accompanied by such intolerable risks.

'It could not be done at all!' he cried angrily. 'So let us hear no more about it. I've warned you once already.'

'Mordieu!' cried Cahusac thickly. 'But I say it could! And I say it's worth the risk.'

'You say so, do you? And where's the risk for you? The Spaniards do not even know that you're in the business. It's easy for you, my lad, to talk about risks that you won't be called upon to run. But it's not quite the same for me. If I fails the Don, he'll want to know the reason. And, anyhow, I've pledged myself, and I'm a man of my word. So let's hear no more about it.'

He towered there, fierce and determined, and Cahusac, after a scowling stare into that long resolute face, uttered a sigh of exasperation, and sat down again.

Blood perceived quite clearly the inward rage that consumed the Frenchman. Vindictive though he might be towards the captain, the venal scoundrel preferred his enemy's gold to his blood, and it was easy to guess the bitterness in which he saw himself compelled to forego the more tangible satisfaction simply because of the risks with which acceptance would be fraught for his associate.

For a while there was no word spoken between the twain, nor did Blood judge that he could further serve his ends by adding anything to what he had already said. He took heart, meanwhile, from the clear perception of the mischief he had already made.

When at last he broke the brooding silence, his words seemed to have no bearing whatever upon the situation.

'Though you may mean to sell me to Spain, sure there's no reason why ye should let me die of thirst in the meantime. I've a throat that'll like the salt ponds in Saltatudos, so I have.'

Although he had a definite purpose to serve, to which he made his thirst a pretext, yet that thirst itself was real, and it was suffered by his captors in common with himself. The air of the room, whose door and window were tight-barred, was stifling. Sam passed a hand across his dank brow, and swept away the moisutre.

'Hell! The heat!' he muttered. 'And now I thirst myself.'

Cahusac licked his dry lips.

'Is there nothing in the house?' he asked.

'No. But it's only a step to the King of France.' He rose. 'I'll go fetch a jack of wine.'

Hope soared wildly in the breast of Captain Blood. It was precisely for this that he had played. Knowing their drinking habit, and how easily suggestion must arouse their desire to indulge it, he had hoped to send one of them upon that errand, and that the one to go would be Sam. With Cahusac he was sure he could make a deal at once.

And then Cahusac, the fool, ruined all by his excessive eagerness. He, too, was on his feet.

'A jack of wine! Yes, yes!' he cried. 'Make haste. I, too, am thirsty.'

Almost was there a quiver in his voice. Sam's ears detected it. He stood arrested, pondering his associate, and reading in his face the little rascal's treacherous intent.

He smiled a little.

'On second thoughts,' said he slowly, 'it will be best if you goes and I stays on guard.'

Cahusac's mouth fell open; almost he turned pale. Inwardly Captain Blood cursed him for a triple fool.

'D'ye mean that ye don't trust me?' he demanded.

'It ain't that; not exactly,' he was answered. 'But it's me that stays.'

Cahusac became really and vehemently angry. 'Ah, ça! Name of God! If you don't trust me with him, I don't trust you neither.'

'You don't need to. You know that I durstn't be tempted by his promises. That's why I'm the one to stay.'

For a long moment the two ruffianly associates glowered at each other in angry silence. Then Cahusac's glance became sullen. He shrugged and turned aside, as if grudgingly admitting that Sam's reasoning was unanswerable. He stood pondering with narrowed eyes. Finally he bestirred himself as if with sudden resolve.

'Ah, bah, I go!' he declared and abruptly went.

As the door closed on the departing Frenchman, Sam resumed his seat at the table. Blood listened to the quickly receding footsteps until they had faded in the distance; then he broke the silence with a laugh that started his companion.

Sam looked up sharply.

'What's amusing you now, captain?'

Blood would have preferred, as we know, to deal with Cahusac. Cahusac was a certainty. Sam was hardly a possibility, obsessed as he obviously was by the fear of Spain. Still, that possibility must be exploited, however slender it might appear.

'Your rashness, bedad!' answered Captain Blood. 'Ye'll not trust him to remain on guard, yet ye trust him out of your sight.'

'And what harm can he do?'

'He might not return alone,' said the captain darkly.

'Blister me!' cried Sam. 'If he tries any such tricks, I'll pistol him at sight. That's how I serves them that gets tricky with me.'

'Ye'd be wise to serve him so in any case. He's a treacherous tyke, Sam, as I should know. Ye've baffled him to-night, and he's not the man to forgive. Ye should know that from his betrayal of me. But ye don't know. Ye've eyes, Sam, but no more sight than a blind puppy. And a head, Sam, but no more brains than are contained in a melon, or you'd never hesitate between Spain and me.'

'Oh, that's it, is it?'

'Just that. Just fifty thousand pieces of eight that I offer, and that I pledge my honour to pay you, as well as pledging my honour to bear no malice and seek no vengeance. Even Cahusac assures you that my word is good, and was ready enough to accept it.'

He paused. The rascally hunter was considering him silently, his face clay-coloured and the perspiration standing in beads upon his brow.

Presently he spoke hoarsely.

'Fifty thousand pieces, you said,' quoth he softly.

'To be sure. For where's the need to share with the French cur? D'ye dream he'd share with you if he could make it all his own by slipping a knife into your back? Come, Sam, make a bold bid for fortune. Damn your fears of Spain! Spain's a phantom! I'll protect you from Spain. You can lie safe aboard my flagship.'

Sam's eyes flashed momentarily, then grew troubled again by thought.

'Fifty thousand. Ah, but the risk!'

'Sure, there's no risk at all,' said Blood. 'Not half the risk you run when it comes out that you sold me to Spain, as come out it will. Man, ye'll never leave Tortuga alive. And if ye did, my buccaneers would hunt ye to the end of the earth.'

'But who's to tell?'

'There's always someone. Ye were a fool to undertake this job, a bigger fool to have taken Cahusac for partner. Hasn't he talked openly of vengeance? And won't he, therefore, be the first man suspected? And when they get him, as get him they will, isn't it as sure as judgment that he'll tell on you?'

'By Heaven, I believe you in that!' cried the man, presented with facts which he had never paused to consider.

'Faith, you may believe me in the rest as readily, Sam.'

'Wait! Let me think!'

As once before, Captain Blood judged wisely that he had said enough for the moment. So far his success with Sam had been greater than he had dared to hope. The seed he had sown might now be left awhile to germinate.

The minutes sped, and Sam, elbows on the table and head in his hand, sat still and thoughtful. When at last he looked up, and the yellow light beat once more upon his face, Blood saw that it was pallid and gleaming. He tried to conjecture how far the poison he had dropped into Sam's mind might have done its work. Presently Sam plucked a pistol from his belt, and examined the priming. This seemed to Blood significant. But it was more significant still that he did not replace the pistol in his belt. He sat nursing it, his yellowish face grimly set, his coarse lips tight with purpose.

'Sam,' said Captain Blood softly, 'what have you decided?'

'I'll put it out of the power of that French mongrel to bubble me,' said the ruffian.

'And nothing else?'

'The rest can wait.'

With difficulty Captain Blood bridled his eagerness to force the pace.

Followed an apparently interminable time of waiting, in a silence broken only by the ticking of the captain's watch, where it lay upon the table. Then, faintly at first, but swiftly growing louder as it drew nearer, came a patter of steps in the lane outside. The door was pushed open, and Cahusac appeared carrying a great black jack.

Sam was already on his feet beyond the table, his right hand behind him.

'You've been a long time gone!' he grumbled. 'What kept you?'

Cahusac was pale, and breathing rather hard, as if he had been running. Blood, whose mind was preternaturally alert, knowing that he had not run, looked elsewhere for a reason, and guessed it to lie in either fear or excitement.

'I made all haste,' was the Frenchman's answer. 'But I was a-thirst myself, and I stayed to quench it. Here's your wine.'

He set the leathern jack upon the table.

And on the instant, almost at point-blank range, Sam shot him through the heart.

Through the rising cloud of smoke, whose acrid smell took him sharply in the throat and set him coughing, Blood saw a picture that he was to retain in his mind to the end of his days. Face downwards on the floor lay Cahusac with twitching limbs, whilst Sam leaned forward across the table to watch him, a grin on his long, animal face.

'I take no risk with French swines like you,' he explained himself, as if his victim could still hear him. Then he put down the pistol and reached for the jack. He raised it to his mouth, and poured a full draught down his parched throat. Noisily he smacked his lips as he set down the vessel. Then, as a bitter after-taste caught him in the throat, he made a grimace, and apprehension charged suddenly through his mind and spread upon his countenance. He snatched up the jack again, and thrust his nose into it, sniffing audibly like a questing dog. Then, with eyes dilating in horror, he stared at Blood out of a countenance that was leather-hued, and in an awful voice screamed a single word:

'Manzanilla!'

Then he swung round, and uttering horrible, blood-curdling blasphemies, he hurled the jack and the remainder of its contents at the dead man on the floor.

A moment later he was doubled up by pain, and his hands were clawing and clutching at his stomach. Then he mastered himself, and without any thought now for Blood, or anything but the torment at work upon his vitals, he reeled across the room and pulled the door wide. The effort seemed to increase his agony. Again he was taken by a cramp that doubled him until his chest was upon his knees, and he howled the while, blaspheming at first, but presently uttering more inarticulate, animal noises. He collapsed at last upon the floor, a raving, writhing lunatic.

Captain Blood considered him grimly, amazed but no whit intrigued. The riddle did not even require the key supplied by the single word that Sam had ejaculated. It was very plain to read.

Never had poetic retribution more fitly and promptly overtaken a pair of villains. Cahusac had loaded the wine with the poison of the manchineel apple, so readily procurable in Tortuga. With this, and so that he might be free to make a bargain with Captain Blood, and to secure to himself the whole of the ransom the captain offered, he had murdered his associate in the very moment in which, with the same intent, his associate had murdered him.

If Captain Blood had his own wits to thank for much, he had his luck to thank for more.

Gradually and slowly, as it seemed to the captive spectator, though in reality very quickly, the poisoned man's struggles grew fainter. Presently they were merely, and ever decreasingly, sporadic, and finally they ceased altogether, as did his breathing, which at the last had grown stertorous. He lay quite still in a cramped huddle against the open door.

By then Captain Blood was giving his attention to himself, and he had already wasted some moments and some strength in ineffectual straining at his bonds. A drumming on the door of the alcove reminded him of the presence of the woman who had been used unconsciously to decoy him. The shot and Sam's utterances had aroused her into activity. Captain Blood called to her.

'Break down the door! There's no one left here but myself.'

Fortunately that door was but a feeble screen of slender planks, and it yielded quickly to the shoulder that she set against it. Wild-eyed and dishevelled she broke at last into the room, then checked and screamed at what she beheld there.

Captain Blood spoke sharply, to steady her.

'Now don't be screeching for nothing, my dear. They're both as dead as the planks of the table, and dead men never harmed anyone. There's a knife yonder. Just be slipping it through these plaguey thongs.'

In an instant he was free and on his feet, shaking out his ruffled plumage. Then he recovered his sword, his pistol, his watch, and his tobacco-box. The gold and the jewels he pushed together in a little heap upon the table.

'Ye'll have a home somewhere in the world, no doubt. This will help you back to it, my girl.'

She began to weep. He took up his hat, picked up his ebony cane from the floor, bade her good-night, and stepped out into the lane.

Ten minutes later, he walked into an excited, torch-lit mob of buccaneers upon the mole, whom Hagthorpe and Wolverstone were organising into search parties to scour the town. Wolverstone's single eye fiercely conned the captain.

'Where the devil have you been?' he asked.

'Observing the luck that goes with blood-money,' said Captain Blood.

THE RAT[1]

ANNE DOUGLAS SEDGWICK

POOR old Aggie, in what state would he find her? Her letter had sounded very buoyant, overjoyed as she had been by the prospect of their reunion; but Aggie had always had the gift of buoyancy. Ralph Barnaby smiled dryly as he thought of it, trundling through the Sussex lanes on the station motor-bus. He was a pale, dark man with something at once glossy and haggard in his aspect; an air of prosperity; but a prosperity won, perhaps, too late. He dined well; he might have starved in the past.

As a matter of fact, Ralph Barnaby, though he had never starved, had for years gone without the things he wanted most, and now that he had won some of them, his capacity for caring about them had altered. It was not that his zest for life was blunted; it had rusted rather, so that his enjoyments wore a jagged edge, and this jagged quality showed itself in his demeanour — his bright, observant eyes resting with a sort of bitterness on the familiar fields and woodlands, his lean, neat hand striking a match at a blow and flinging it away, when his cigarette was lighted, as if a malediction went with it. He was nervous to-day, too, thinking of Aggie and of their youth.

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Twenty years had passed since he had seen her, but how clearly he remembered her, the tall, fair, untidy creature, gentle, yet with something wild about her, fond to the point of fatuity, yet quickly flaming. How, for instance, she had hated being called Aggie, or, worse still, Agg; and it was he, with his teasing, malicious affection, who had fixed the derogatory nickname upon her. She had burst into tears one day, he remembered, when he had called her Agg at a tennis party, while Ted Masters was talking to her, and had rushed away to hide in the shrubbery. The name had stuck. It suited her. No one in the family, except her mother, had ever called her Agnes.

Yes, if he had had a hard time, Aggie's had been harder; yet she had managed, all the same, to survive everything. She had managed to get up again, smiling, or almost smiling, after every knock-down blow. She had survived the dense and struggling poverty of their beginnings, though it had drained her youth from her, the elder sister in the crowded country parsonage — with the invalid mother on her hands.

She had never been able to escape, as he and most of the others had, and she had tended and nursed and loved and buried mother, father, and the succession of brothers and sisters: silly Dick, who drank himself to death; vain Randolph, who went on the stage, and married a chorus-girl, and died of consumption — with Aggie at his pillow — in the Fulham lodging-house; Margaret with her religious manias; and Gwen, the beauty, who had made a good match and died, after a year of it, with her first baby. Aggie had rejoiced and sorrowed with them all.

When all were dead and her home sunken away from beneath her feet, she had endured the exile to Canada with the grudging, grumbling uncle to whom, Ralph suspected, she had been servant as well as nurse and companion, and in Canada she had met again, and loved, Ted Masters, who, after a seven-years' engagement, threw her over for a girl who had money. She had got up again after that, too, as far as he could tell from her letters; at all events, she had written of her disaster without one word of bitterness or blame. Ted had met some one who would make him happier; that had been her phrase; and after an interval she had gone on writing about the Canadian birds and rivers.

At last, thank goodness — though it was only when her youth was long past and her hopes long spent — Uncle Alfred died and actually — cursed old brute, he had, all the same, shown a tardy decency — left her some money, enough money for her to come home and settle in their old village.

He had been away when Aggie returned to England; his work as correspondent of a London daily had taken him to Italy to write of the Fascisti; and, though he had been back for some months, he had not till now been able to manage the week-end with Aggie. Truth to tell, he was not eager to see her. He shrank from the spectre of their youth which the meeting must evoke. He was so changed, and, if she were not, that would make it all the more difficult; for Aggie had always expected more of people than they had to give; and of him what would she not expect? She had loved them all; but he had been the one nearest her. He had been the one who had given her more of life than all the rest of them put together. It had always been with Aggie that he had talked, always to Aggie that he had brought the problems and the solutions, and she had understood and followed.

He had made poor Aggie suffer, too, for it was owing to him that she had lost her ingenuous orthodoxy, and he still winced a little in remembering how hard she had taken the loss. How long ago it was! Those were the days in which they read 'The Golden Bough' and Nietzsche, Samuel Butler and Schopenhauer. Long ago, indeed! Victorian, almost, those ardours of negation. Organized Christianity, it was true, still smirked and hobbled on its way, respectfully stepping aside to let the chariots of science thunder by and only asking not to be knocked into the ditch; but who really cared anything about the old problems nowadays? They were all as dead as doornails. Who bothered about souls to save, when souls had been resolved into Libido and Narcissism?

But he saw himself, down from Cambridge, in the dark little morning-room at the Rectory, rather a disagreeable young man, he suspected, lying back in his deep chair and watching Aggie, who would, of course, be darning at the table, while he tested his latest discoveries upon her. Poor Aggie. She was really of the 'Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever' type; and he recalled, as he helped her to cleverness, her gaze of mingled trust and anguish.

He must have been rather disagreeable, for why couldn't he have left Aggie alone? He had been fond of her, of course, and he had wanted to share things with her; but he had also wanted to test his own power, to compel and dominate. And had there not always lurked a dim suspicion of something stubborn, evasive, in Aggie, something that took refuge in silence at moments of crisis and foiled his subterranean pleasure in seeing her fortresses crumble? Aggie had sometimes exasperated him. She would not own to complete defeat. It was always the same old trick of hers. She got up again.

They had rattled along the highroad, with the Downs, in the distance, grape-coloured and mildly majestic against the sky, and through a fold or wooded valley (woods he remembered, where, as children, they had gathered primroses in spring), and now, stopping by the way to drop sundry passengers, they were passing through a little hamlet of somnolent red brick and thatched beam and plaster. Aggie's cottage stood just beyond it, across the green, and he recalled, in seeing it, the old labourer and his wife who, in their youth, had lived there. It had since then been redeemed to week-end purposes and was now an obvious retreat for an impoverished spinster; yet, among its small old plum trees and under its recent slates, it looked even meaner and more exposed than he had expected. This was, then, the acquisition of which Aggie had written in such rapturous terms, and he had time, before they drew up in front of it, for a turn of an old familiar irony.

A tall white-and-black figure came speeding to the gate; tall, with pale, untidy hair. It was Aggie, of course, and she had emerged upon the road, oblivious of the onlookers in the bus, to throw her arms about his neck.

'Ralph — dear, dear, darling Ralph!' she said.

Wonderful, such survivals of instinct! It was love, deep love he heard, and instinct in him answered it, bringing tears for a moment to his cold, dark eyes, so that it was through tears he saw her, so close that she was only visible as an irradiating, benignant presence. Then, as they drew apart, hands clasped, to look clearly at each other, he saw that she was an aged, a devastated Aggie.

Her teeth were blighted and stopped with gold; her hair was almost white and wasted away from neck and temples; strange, irrelevant wrinkles puckered her lips and spun webs upon her cheeks, and the voice she spoke in was strange; it must be a Canadian accent, and it was intensely disagreeable, even painful, to him to hear it.

They continued to contemplate each other, the bus having disappeared round a turn in the road, and he could remark, his eye running furtively down her spare, tall form, that she was really the typical dowdy English old maid, in white silk blouse, belted at the waist and built up in the neck with boned lace, long black alpaca skirt, and low kid house-shoes, showing jet ornaments on the little straps that crossed the instep. In these days of high heels, short skirts, and shingled hair she seemed to belong to an antediluvian era and he realized, not only that she had grown old, but that, to be so dressed, Uncle Alfred must have left her less money than he had imagined. Her clothes were survivals.

'Oh, Ralph, isn't it too wonderful! I can hardly believe it!' she was saying. She was leading him in, her hand tightly clasped on his, up the brick path between the rows of pinks and violas. 'Think of my having found it here! The Grants' old cottage! All beautifully done over, water laid on, a bathroom, and a new roof. Too wonderful!'

It was no doubt a pleasant change from a country where one could pick up an accent like that; but it was really a very mean little cottage and his presence seemed to fill it to overflowing as he followed her with his valise up the precipitous staircase.

'I've kept the window closed and the curtains drawn all day,' said Aggie in the little back bedroom, hastening to open the casement — 'because of the sun; but it's nice and cool now, isn't it? Only see, Ralph, the view one gets! The Downs over the apple trees!'

'That is an escape, isn't it?' he said, walking to look.

'Isn't it! And there is the garden; I've not been able to do much yet; but it will be so pretty. Of course, the road in front' — she was answering his implied criticism — 'it's a pity; but do you know, for a lonely woman like me, it's really rather nice, too. It's not the highroad, you see, and I enjoy watching the dear country things that pass; sheep and cows, and horses going to plough. It's rather a darling of a road, really.'

'I'm sure it is; but I'd rather look at the Downs all the same,' said Ralph. 'Have you got some hot water for me, Aggie? The drive was dusty.'

Hot water was there, under its towel, and his favourite soap; he had forgotten that it was his favourite. 'Oh, Ralph, you *always* wanted it at home! Don't you remember? The lettuce-green, nice flat, tablet look? And mother said it was too expensive — fourpence a cake it was in those days; and I always contrived it for you!' laughed Aggie. She was highly excited. 'I'll leave you, then. You'll come down to tea at once, won't you? The drawing-room is at the bottom of the stairs.'

'Obviously,' Ralph said to himself, washing his hands.

'And the dining-room opposite and the kitchen behind. I can almost hear the village handmaiden breathing down there now.' But his little room with its white dimity hangings was cool and pleasant. There was a bowl of dark clove-pinks on the writing-table, a volume of 'Max's' essays and a Ross and Somerville on the little table by his bed, and over the mantelpiece an old photograph of his mother that he went to look at.

How like himself, really, and how well he remembered her, with her dark, suffering eyes and acid smile! He and Gwen had been the only ones who had taken after her. All the rest had been fair with varying degrees of the foolishness that had characterized their father; for he had been the most foolish of the lot: an emotional Evangelical of a really repulsive type, bearded, beaming, exuding forgiveness and sympathy when none were asked of him, and very easily hurt and disconcerted. Not quite a gentleman, silly old father, that was the simple truth of the matter, and Ralph seemed to see it with a special clearness as he stood drying his hands and looking at his mother's picture — for she, he felt sure, had seen it.

In the tiny drawing-room Aggie, her faded, yellow-white head high under the low ceiling, was poised, waiting to see his surprise; as ill luck would have it, he struck his forehead against the lintel in entering so that some moments passed in assuring her — untruthfully — that he was not hurt, before he could look round. But, with the scent of the lettuce-green soap hanging round him still, the sense of his mother's eyes on his, it hardly surprised him to find himself among the old Rectory furniture. For there was the worn sofa where their mother had lain and the deep armchair where their father had read 'The Rock' and the upright piano on which he had first interpreted 'Tristan' to Aggie. He could almost believe himself a boy again as he looked; and 'How in Heaven's name do they come to be here?' he asked.

'I found them; isn't it too wonderful? — in the Astons' farmhouse. They bought them at the auction and sold them back to me when they found I wanted them so much. Wasn't it good of them? And it makes all the difference, of course. The pictures I took with me to Canada.'

Yes; there they were, the pictures: Whistler's 'Portrait of My Mother,' which he had given Aggie on her twenty-first birthday, and, in comical contrast, 'The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner,' which had come to them from their grandmother and had made Aggie cry in the nursery. And there, standing among the bowls of pinks and roses, just as they had stood at the Rectory, were the photographs of frock-coated, bewhiskered grandpapa with a book under his arm, and capped and tippeted grandmama holding a hideous half-nude baby who was himself, Gwen in her tight-waisted wedding-dress, her hair, under its veil and wreath, distended after the fashion of the time, and the dirge-like family groups, papa in the midst with his absurd round hat and band. Desperately comic they all looked, yet a lump was in his throat as he recognized them.

And there was Aggie, embodying the past. A flush was on her cheek; her voice fluttered as she poured out the dark Indian tea of their childhood. She was moved, ecstatically, terribly moved, for she remembered everything, and Gwen in her wedding-dress was as real to her as he himself sitting there, trying not to mind the tea, and they were both as dear to her as ever.

That was all that spinsters of her type came to mean, he reflected; storehouses: pathetic, musty, tinkling storehouses of the past. He felt that he should break something, overturn something, if he moved, and he hoped that he might successfully conceal from Aggie that if still dear she was no longer near him and not very real either.

He was sorry for her, very sorry, for she made him think of a dusty, dreary mouse that has been let out of the trap too late. She sat in the sunlight outside the trap, panting softly, not caring to venture far afield, but aware only of good fortune. For Aggie — he saw it more and more clearly as the day wore on — was not at all sorry for herself, and he even suspected that she, who had got nothing out of life but this tardy escape, was happier than he, who had got so much. It was pitiful, absurd, and a little vexatious, too, to realize.

They sat in the orchard behind the house. The summer grass was tall about their feet and over their heads were the gnarled branches of the apple trees, and he had to confess to Aggie that he had lost his old interest in birds when she cried out excitedly at the tinkling passage of a family of blue tits. He smoked and Aggie knitted, and, though she was evidently shy, she suspected nothing of his aloofness, for she talked on and on, eagerly, happily, talked of him and of his full, wonderful life, of how becoming his baldness was and how interesting all those people must be whom he knew in London, people who wrote and composed and painted.

Ralph had to smile to himself when he heard her; the thought of Aggie and his friends was entertaining. How at sea she would have been among them all! All the values of his life, those intellectual and æsthetic values, would be almost incomprehensible to her, and as for its emotional values, what would poor Aggie have made of Babs and Violet and Germaine? In regard to such illicit love-affairs as his had been, he suspected that Aggie kept still her old Rectory judgments. What would Aggie think if she were to know that he was in love with Mrs. Grafton now? She and her like were the background against which poor Aggie's figure stood out so obsolete, so defeated. Alluring, compelling, sophisticated creatures all of them, and, first and foremost, female; whereas Aggie, though certainly female, was only so in the negative sense, the sense in which one lost everything and gained nothing by being a woman.

He was very kind to her, however; he took her in as far as it was possible to take her. He could not tell her about Mrs. Grafton, but he told her about his war work, about those of his friends whose names meant something to her, about his flat in Westminster which she must some day come and see. He had picked up some rather nice things in his wanderings, and, though she would not like the pictures by his post-impressionist friends, she would like his bits of porcelain and lacquer and ivory, and his Pérsian rugs.

'I'm not really successful, you know, Aggie. A foothold gained is all I have. But that's something, after all one has been through, isn't it?'

'Oh, *isn't* it, Ralph!' said Aggie.

The helpless little dinner was served by the flushed little maid who had cooked it, and after coffee, made rather nicely by Aggie, with a machine, on the table, they went into the garden again. Aggie wore a thin black dress and a white lace fichu; survivals, yet becoming. Her pale hair and face emerged from the leafy shadows with a moonlight sweetness and her unseen gaze troubled him a little; for it was as if, in the darkness, she might be reading things hidden to her in the light. He did not want Aggie to guess at the weariness, the disdain and passion that scarred his mind.

He asked her about Uncle Alfred. 'How did you stand twenty years of him? I remember him as a most appalling old bully and bore.'

Aggie laughed, but shook her head. 'Really he wasn't so bad, Ralph, poor old Uncle Alfred. He had a dreadful temper, of course; dreadful. But he suffered more from it himself than anybody else.'

'He made you suffer from it, I imagine.'

'Not after just the first. I got used to it in time. I grew very crafty, too, and cunning,' Aggie smiled. 'I knew how to circumvent him. No, I was fond of Uncle Alfred, Ralph. And he really grew quite fond of me, I think.'

'"Do I stand and stare, all's blue,"' thought Ralph. And what about Ted Masters? Had she been able to weave him into the charming pattern of all for the best? Aggie was evading him, as of old. She would not own that things had been hideous, horrible; and something of his old testing malice came into his mood as he asked presently, lighting a cigarette; 'Do you ever see anything of Ted Masters?'

In the slight silence that followed, he was a little surprised at himself for having asked the question. It had grown so dark that he could only see of Aggie's face a moth-grey oval, impalpable among the shadows, and a clot of pallor where her hands were clasped in her lap. Hands and face were still. She was arrested; daunted, he imagined.

'No, never,' she then said. 'They live out in British Columbia. They are very happy, I believe.' It was a moth-like voice; dusty, pallid; yet it launched itself with resolution on the darkness.

'Not quite "all blue," that,' thought Ralph and he felt as if he were lying again in the deep chair at the Rectory, watching Aggie while he tested her with drop after drop of his corrosive acid. He felt sorry for her, yet she vexed him, and he wanted to see what she would do.

'Are they? Is he?' he commented. 'Well, I'm sorry to hear it. Cursed hound.'

Another silence fell, a heavier silence, charged, he felt, with a repudiation that only did not flame because the capacity for flaming had died with Aggie's youth.

'I always thought him a poor creature,' Ralph went on, the memory of Aggie's wrongs giving an added edge to his voice, 'and never could imagine what you saw in him. But I did not expect him to show himself so completely the coward and cad of popular fiction. What luck that Uncle Alfred didn't die fifteen years ago; for you'd have been married to Ted now, if you'd had the money then.'

Aggie now spoke; with difficulty. 'He wasn't like that. You misunderstand. It was never money. He met some one he cared for more.' And, actually, the old flame was in her voice as she added: 'You have no right to call him a cad and a coward.'

Antagonism rose swiftly in him at the sound of hers, though he was sorrier for her than ever, as he said, laughing bitterly: 'My poor Aggie! How like you! I apologize. But I must just say, in self-exoneration, that I'm your brother, and fond of you, and have a certain sense of family pride; and I heard from the Jamiesons when they came home all the facts of the case. She was a plain, clumsy, common young woman and she had nine hundred pounds a year. Of course you made it easy for him and your generosity is romantic; but you can't make a romantic figure out of Ted Masters.'

That was what she had done. He knew it as he listened to her careful breathing. He had been, he had remained, the romance of her life, and she loved him now as much as she had ever loved him. It was fatuity, indeed. It was just what might have been expected from Aggie.

She sat, now, silent, and, tossing away his cigarette, he got up, turning the awkward corner for them both with a cheerful 'Well, shall we go to bed, my dear? It's late, and I've had a tiring day.'

A very tiring day it had been. He felt that fully as he followed her into the house, his shoes clammy with the dew. They had sat out too long, and it was a devastating business, this meeting with the past and Aggie.

In the little entrance she fumbled for the candles and matches; he suspected, even, that she purposely delayed. Yet, when the light revealed her downcast face, he saw, with relief, that she was not crying. Aggie in tears would, indeed, have been a lamentable ending to the day.

She went before him up the stairs and led him into his room and there, looking away, her candlestick in her hand, she forced herself to speak:

'I do hope you'll sleep well, Ralph, dear.'

'I do hope you will.'

The room was full of his youth; the scent of the soap; the scent of the clove-pinks; his mother's eyes glancing upon them from the wall. It was he, suddenly, who felt like crying. 'Forgive me if I've been rough,' he said. He leaned to her and kissed her forehead.

His kind words, his voice, were a release. He felt the gratitude, the devotion, soar up in her.

Her head bent to his, her candle in her hand, she stood quite silent for a moment and then murmured, hurriedly:

'I know it's because you're my brother; I know it's because you are fond of me. But we must never talk of it. I can't. It meant everything to me. And he wasn't like that; *she* wasn't. She was very young and sweet and good. He told me. I was already getting old; and he had waited so long. He had come to feel that I was his sister. Good-night, dear Ralph.'

And Aggie, having given her testimony, was gone.

Aggie's testimony touched, but did not convince him; it only convinced him that she was determined to see harmony where there was discord, and when, at breakfast, he found her restored and tranquil, he felt a slight return of irony. It was really always the same old story. She evaded him. She refused to crumble. She got up again.

They walked about the village after breakfast, and he could see, in greetings from neighbours on their way to church, that Aggie was securely planted on her old roots. Roots were never forgotten in an English village, and Miss Barnaby of the Rectory was as real to them still as Miss Barnaby of the cottage.

'Do you ever go to church now?' he asked her.

Aggie said she did sometimes; but to-day was dedicated to him.

'Is it to give an example to the villagers, or social pressure, Aggie?'

'I don't think either of those reasons,' said Aggie. 'It meant so much once.'

'I should think that would make it mean less now.'

'It doesn't,' she said, smiling; evading him. 'Do you remember old Mrs. Wilsey, Ralph?'

He did. Horrible old creature.

And there she was, hairless, bloated and leering at her cottage gate. He greeted her.

'They take an unconscionable time a-dying, don't they?' he remarked as they went on down the village street. 'She was old when I was a boy. Do you remember that meeting for reforming the village charities poor father tried to address? All the well-to-do recipients of the endowments assembled in a fury at the idea that they were to be mulcted of their coals and blankets. How they howled and hooted! I can see Mrs. Wilsey's square, howling mouth.'

'Father understood. He bore them no grudge for it. They have so little. It's that that makes them afraid and suspicious.'

'Yes, suspicious of their best friends. They've no sense of honour. It's a depraving thing, village life,' Ralph mused. 'Craft, ingratitude, and caution are the characteristics of the English peasant.'

'Oh, no, Ralph. That isn't fair. They've had to be cautious, always, just as an animal has; and they can't always distinguish. But they are so kind. It's wonderful, their kindness to each other, often, and their patience and fortitude. Much better things are coming, too. Things are opening out for them. The Woman's Institute here has done so much already to break down old suspicions.'

'Has it, indeed? Do you breed rabbits, Aggie, and make raffia mats and get them to dance on the green?'

'That's the idea,' laughed Aggie. 'And it's all great fun. We all enjoy it. I'm secretary. It was nice of them to elect me, wasn't it? They wanted me to feel at home again.'

It was again a hot day, and, when they came in from their little round, Ralph lay down on the sofa, his hands behind his head. The drawing-room was on the shady side of the house in the morning and a peaceful Sabbath twilight filled it.

Ralph's heart was heavy, restless. The old furniture, the old photographs, old Aggie among them — it all made him miserable. That was what it all came to, he supposed.

'How you remind me of mother, lying there,' said Aggie. She looked tired, her head leaning back against the high chair; but he saw that she was not in the least miserable. Her hands folded in her lap had a Sabbath look, too; thin, white, peaceful hands.

'Poor mother,' said Ralph. 'How many years was it that she was ill?'

'Ten or eleven it must have been. Poor darling.'

'Yet I was sorry for father, too,' said Ralph. 'How she despised him — and let him see it.'

Aggie flushed. Her flushes were no longer the rosy, girlish suffusions. Their heavier dye came from a more deeply involved heart, was more organic.

'Despised him?'

'You can't pretend you didn't always see it? — her contempt. She was a clever woman and he — well, we must own that father was a silly old sheep, mustn't we?' said Ralph.

'I don't think we must,' said Aggie gently. She reached out her hand for her knitting, unrolled it, and began to knit with fingers that fumbled a little.

'Not even if it's true?'

'No; not even if it's true.'

'Why not, my dear?'

'Some things are sacred.'

'Some things may be; but silly father wasn't. Come, come, Aggie,' he smiled rallyingly at her.

But, her eyes on her knitting, she shook her head. 'What is sacred is that he was our father.'

'Propagated us, you mean? In answer to that I can only repeat — poor mother!'

Aggie grew crimson.

'I apologize, Aggie!' Yet Ralph's compunction was filled with laughter; he had amused himself. 'You don't understand the language of my kind. We are ruthlessly free from old constraints and don't find things sacred easily.'

'Why should you?' said Aggie. 'Sacred things are hard. That doesn't make them less true.'

'That sounds rather clever, Aggie. You'll own, then, that it is difficult to think of father as a sacred object. I find it too difficult. I think of a sacred object as something which imposes itself; something that one is bound to accept.'

Aggie sat silent.

After midday dinner a cheerful, chattering lady came in, all *endimanchée*, with a very smart plume on her head, ostensibly to see Aggie, but really, Ralph felt, in order to have a look at him. Aggie would rather have liked him to stay and display himself, but, after he had listened to Mrs. Bayliss for five minutes, he remembered that he had an important letter to write and went upstairs to his room.

It would, indeed, be as well that he should write to Mrs. Grafton before he saw her again — it was next Wednesday that she had asked him to come and hear some Russian singers at her house — and his brow darkened as he sat down at the little writing-table in the window to consider the situation.

It must be a careful letter. He wanted to show Mrs. Grafton that he rather than she had the upper hand, for power rather than protestation would move her. Their intercourse so far had consisted in a duel of wits, and since, with two husbands and many lovers to her credit, she had quite as much experience as he, the duel had demanded all his resources. Mrs. Grafton's present line was that she was tired of love, disappointed and *désillusionnée*, and asked only to devote herself to her darling daughter, a young lady heard of frequently by all her friends, but seldom seen, and even if she consented to devote herself to him and relegate the daughter for a little longer, he knew, with a pang of presage, that she was going to make him suffer.

Sitting there in Aggie's cottage, between the white dimity curtains with the little balls along the edge, it grew upon him that he was suffering now. It was not only Aggie and the past that made him miserable; it was Mrs. Grafton and the present. He was in love with her; he was desperately in love with her, even while he could analyze her away into a clever little house and clever little dinner-parties, delicious dresses, pearls, and permanent waving. There was not very much more to her. Her languidly appraising eyes were almost as much of a modern formula as the pearls; and the body, alert or lounging in its silken sheath, not one whit more white or shapely than those of the other ladies who smoked and chattered in her drawing-room.

But there it was; he was desperately in love with her, and she was not a fruit for him to choose and pluck, but a rock against which he would dash himself; and he grew sicker and sicker as he thought of it.

Aggie's curtains flapped softly in the afternoon breeze and he heard Aggie conducting Mrs. Bayliss round the garden below. 'I'm thinking of keeping bees down in that corner; everything about bees is so delicious, isn't it?' she was saying. Secure, contented Aggie; the untarnished image of Ted Masters in her bosom, and bees, downs, cows, and Mrs. Bayliss to look at. As for himself, was he not becoming a battered old sensualist and must not all the zest and bitter-sweet charm soon go out of the game of love when one could see so clearly that it was no longer worth the candle?

He addressed himself anew to his letter, trying to make capital of his distaste and to infuse a deeper flavour of ironic detachment into his phrases; but it would not do. Mrs. Grafton would see through him at once. It was of no avail to pretend that he idly ranged at large, when she knew as well as he did that she had him trapped securely.

When Mrs. Bayliss had been gone for some time, he went downstairs with the letter in his hand.

'Can we post this when we go out?' he asked. They had agreed that a walk would be pleasant after tea.

'There's a post-box just across the green. Was it a *very* interesting person — the letter?' Aggie smiled at him from the tea-table. 'I imagine an erudite French writer, old, with a long beard and a silk cap with a tassel on it!'

'Far from it. It is to a very persistent, very foolish woman I have to dine with on Wednesday,' said Ralph. It gratified him to say this, but it did not really lighten his mood, and Aggie's tone of happy banter altered as she glanced at his face and heard his voice.

'Mrs. Bayliss asked us to come to tea,' she said. 'They are at the Lodge, where the Melvilles used to be. You wouldn't have cared to go, would you, Ralph?'

'Not at all. Who are the Baylisses?'

'He is retired from something in the City; banking, I think. A nice, kind man. And there are several married children coming and going and all the small grandchildren. They would not interest you, but as country neighbours they are very nice; and so kind to me. Mrs. Bayliss has sent me flowers ever since I came.'

Aggie's eyes, while she talked and poured out his tea, passed gently, solicitously, over his face, and he suspected, as he had suspected last night, that her intuition did not really fail her and that, with all her talk of success, she blindly, obscurely, pitied him.

'Do you know,' he said, drinking his tea — how he hated Indian tea! — 'you've come to talk like an American, Aggie.'

He had intended to say nothing to Aggie about her deplorable accent, just as he had intended to say nothing about the tea; but while he was controlling one distaste, the other came out.

'One does, over there, you know,' said Aggie. She smiled in answer to his smile; but she flushed a little, too. 'Is it very bad?'

'Well, it depends on who is listening,' he said lightly.

When tea was over, they went out and posted the letter. Then they took the winding country road, bordered by low willows, that ran among the water-meadows. 'Shall we go into the meadows? It's dusty here,' he said. He was feeling angry and unhappy, but the meadows, mild and shining, like a Blake 'Song of Innocence,' soothed him a little, and leaning on the little bridge, he smiled round at Aggie as he said: 'Poor, after your Canadian rivers, isn't it?'

She was aware at once of his wish to make amends and her face lighted to relief. Aggie was *endimanchée*, too; but her white hat became her; her smiling face was almost young in its shadow.

'Oh, they are so splendid, Ralph! I wish you could see them! Blue, with islands, and great birches growing along their banks. But we can do better than this in England, can't we? — though I love the little stream and all the loosestrife and meadowsweet.'

'Yes; it all goes together. It all brings back one's youth, doesn't it?'

'Doesn't it, Ralph! All the things we did here when we were young! River things; watching birds, and fishing — not that we ever caught much, did we! But one almost always sees a kingfisher here still, if one waits long enough.'

A clump of meadowsweet grew just opposite, its feet in the muddy margin of the stream, its fragrant plumes of yeasty white lifted against the sky. Tall, kind, familiar flower, trustful and full of childish memories; it brought all sorts of associations to his jaded mind.

'It's just the colour of your hair,' he said.

'Of my hair! The meadowsweet!' How he had surprised and pleased her.

'It's rather like you altogether,' said Ralph. It really was.

'Oh, Ralph, how dear of you!' Never had he given her so much pleasure.

She saw all in the flower that he saw. Tears of happiness came to her eyes, and, as they moved on, arm in arm, she murmured: 'And I was feeling so old — so stupid: as if I could never interest you again.'

Well, neither could she. Poor old Aggie. His irony returned for her facile optimism. He had not meant that she was not old and stupid in comparing her to the meadowsweet. There was something foolish about it, too. And he liked the clear, close outline of the modern woman's head; not looped, twined, helpless locks such as Aggie's.

The thought of Mrs. Grafton's head struck at his heart.

'How do you manage it, Agg?' he said suddenly, and something subterranean in his mood brought the old nickname to his lips.

'Manage what, Ralph?'

'Your trust; your contentment; your happiness. Standing in the mud as you are; sunken in this dull little place; withering towards the grave like the rest of us; how do you manage to grow so exuberantly?'

'But it isn't mud; it isn't dull to me,' she said gently. They were walking on among the soft green meadows, and she held his arm, full of trust, and looked about her. 'It all means loveliness,' she said.

'I see that it does; to you; just as I'm sure it does to the meadowsweet. But how do you manage it? In a world like this? And after all the odious things that have happened to you?'

She was silent for a moment, her eyes cast down. And then, thinking intently, she tried to tell him. 'It came to me, Ralph. It's not contentment, you know — not exactly contentment. But you remember how everything seemed lost; all the things I'd believed; the things that made life possible. For years everything was lost to me. And then, everything came back; only differently. I found it was all true; in a different way.'

'What was all true, Aggie?'

'That God is our Father and loves us,' said poor Aggie.

He was silent, glancing down at her, astonished; and then, as she forced herself on, listening with a growing sense of indignation.

'It's not that things seem like that, I know. It's all like a dreadful labyrinth, of course — life, I mean, and one can't see a step before one sometimes. But if one has faith — if one holds the thread, the clue — it always leads one out; something answers from within us.'

He listened, his arm in hers; his eyes turned away from her, and he almost smiled to hear her. So that was it; and how it always came back to the same thing; to the craving for life that sent the very universe spinning on its way. Life would always thus justify its thirst for happiness, and, if the outer streams dried up, it would seek the inner mirage of celestial springs of water. It was at these that Aggie lapped. And she hoped that he might be brought to lap. She was sorry for him. She guessed that he was not happy. Her hope thrilled in her voice.

'My poor old Aggie,' he said, gently and kindly, 'don't you know enough about psychology to have realized that self-suggestion explains all such mystic experiences? Or — if one prefers the latest jargon — the father complex; the longing that's in all of us to get back to shelter and safety. If you want anything very much — and of course we all want happiness and safety — and tell yourself often enough that it is there for you to take, you'll have to believe it. Nothing else *can* seem true to you. People have suggested themselves into believing anything.'

He knew from her silence that she was arrested, that the current was checked, indeed. No doubt the commonplaces he uttered could not be entirely new to her.

She said presently: 'But every one's deepest intuition is the same: they all find the same thing.'

'Of course they do,' said Ralph, 'because, being all the same creatures, evolved from the same protoplasm, they all want the same thing and look for it. That simple fact makes so many of the dictums of religion sound so childish. "Seek and ye shall find." Of course you will — if you seek with faith enough and shut out disturbing fact. That's the infallible recipe for arriving at happiness, and the infallible recipe, I should say, for evading truth.

'It's when we use our minds and look out at life that we find truth; and it's not a loving truth; it's heartless; blind and indifferent to us and to our longings. But when we shut our eyes and listen only to the rhythm of our heart-beats, we find what we want to find. The heart can only sing the song it's told to sing; over and over again; and the more you sink down into it and close your ears to the outer discords, the happier you will be.'

His voice had dropped its veil of kindness, though its bitterness was not for Aggie, but for life, for cruel, hostile, mocking life. He had almost forgotten Aggie. Then he heard her speak.

'But outer reality — the reality we look at with our minds — isn't all reality,' she said. 'Reason doesn't always contradict the heart.'

'No, of course it doesn't,' he assented. Was poor old Aggie really going to try to withstand him? 'We've been formed by reality. We are a part of the world we live in; our consciousness has risen from it and can know it, within limits. There are joys to be found in life that Reason can approve. Joys of the mind and body. Art, thought, love. It's only when they fail us that we seek the mystic consolations.

'But we must be honest with ourselves, Aggie, and own that if Nature can give us satisfactions, she can also deprive us of them. Death, disintegration, decadence, are as real as life and progress. We can eat, drink, and be merry, practise the arts and love one another, but tomorrow we assuredly die; and when we die, whatever gods may continue, it's an end of us. We mean a great deal to ourselves, but nothing at all to eternity. That's an intuition of mine that is quite as deep as any of yours, Aggie; and my reason approves it.'

'I can't believe that,' said Aggie.

He smiled slightly to himself in hearing her voice, for he had frightened her, badly, although she wouldn't own to it. 'You can't because you won't,' he said, 'and I don't quarrel with you for it, my dear. Go on, by all means, and be happy as you can manage to be. No one could grudge you the short-lived illusion.'

Now she was silent, perfectly silent. Perhaps something else had come to her and chilled, not only trust, but even protest. She must now feel that it was not to loving-kindness that she had spoken. That would be good for Aggie, too, and give her a hint of the true character of the universe.

They were again approaching the bridge, and when they reached it Ralph found that he felt very tired. He paused and leaned on the railing.

'It's very close and stuffy, isn't it?' he said. 'Don't bother about me, Aggie. Go on, and I'll follow you. I'll rest here for a moment.'

But Aggie, perhaps feeling that she, too, needed rest, did not go on, and they leaned together looking in silence down at the sluggish stream.

For a long time they leaned there, and presently a stout rat appeared round a corner and ran nimbly along the opposite bank. They were both so still that it was completely unaware of them and sat up to wash its face with its forepaws.

'See the rat,' said Ralph. He was glad of a subject of conversation and pleased to watch the rat, though something in its aspect he found repellent, a creature of the darkness displaying itself brazenly in the sunlight.

'Isn't it a mole?' said Aggie.

Her voice was absent. She was not really looking.

'No; you can't idealize him. It is a rat,' said Ralph.

He glanced at her, smiling. He felt more genuinely kind towards Aggie now that he had made her fortress crumble. His indignation against her fatuity was exorcised.

Aggie was willing to keep up appearances. She faintly smiled back as she said, 'But there's no harm in a rat.'

'A great deal of harm, I think,' said Ralph. 'They're most repulsive brutes. I wonder how this one comes to be here. There's a garbage-heap somewhere about, I suppose. See the gusto with which he licks his fat sides, thinking only of himself.'

'Perhaps he is a mother-rat and loves his children,' Aggie smiled on, if wanly.

And Ralph rejoined, lightly: 'He certainly loves his life and wants to be happy.'

The rat continued unaware of them. He washed his face and licked his sides and then galloped away along the bank again. A rat, it seemed, in a cheerful mood of adventure. At the base of the meadowsweet he paused. He sniffed about its roots; he stood up on his hind legs to extend his investigations; then he dropped to the foot of a tall stalk and began to gnaw at it.

'Now I never saw a rat do that before,' said Ralph.

'Perhaps,' said Aggie, wedded to her maternal interpretations, 'he is building a nest.'

The rat gnawed with a will, his cord-like tail switching at moments from side to side, and snapping suddenly, the tall stem fell and all the feathery summits lay in the mud. Frightened, the rat scampered off and disappeared down a hole.

'Now why did he do that?' Ralph wondered. He felt disturbed by the incident.

'Perhaps he thought it would do for a nest,' Aggie repeated.

Ralph dismissed the surmise. 'A rat would know better. It couldn't be of use to him. It was malice; that's my interpretation; sheer malice and the love of destruction. Life shows other qualities, you see, besides the craving for happiness. It's a cruel thing as well as a greedy one.'

'I'm sure the rat didn't mean to be cruel. Only human beings can mean to be cruel,' Aggie murmured. To the last she would oppose him.

But something in her voice drew his eyes to her.

She leaned there beside him, looking at the prostrate meadowsweet, and as he looked at it, too, he remembered, suddenly, his simile of a little while before. He looked at the meadowsweet with Aggie, and he saw what she saw. If Aggie was like the meadowsweet, if Aggie symbolized the innocent greed of Nature, what was he like and what did he symbolize?

Ralph Barnaby had known very unpleasant feelings that afternoon, but to see himself as the rat was the most unpleasant of all. He had a truth-loving mind and it did not flinch now from its contemplation. If Aggie meant life and the craving, creative element in Nature, he meant Death, the cruel element that denies and destroys. Both were necessary in order that the great show should go on; but he did not like the part he had just played. He did not like the rat. He turned away from the stream and they walked on. And while they crossed the meadows and went up the road to the village green, neither found a word to say. The rat had completed the revelation that he had made of himself to Aggie. What could she say to him when it had been betrayed to her that he meant to do her harm?

Well, it would be a relief, really, if she were done with him. It would be far better for her that she should never see him again. Their paths had parted long years ago and it was absurd to try to make them meet. It had been the absurdity, the falsity of their relation, that had made him cruel. They had nothing in common, absolutely nothing. They had nothing to give each other.

He felt, during the hours that followed, while they faced each other over the cold Sunday supper, and then, in the drawing-room, made conversation, that Aggie, at last, saw as he said. In the shallow, listless tones he heard the note, strange, indeed, in Aggie, of convention, of a shield held up to keep him at a distance.

She was afraid of him; and all that she asked of him now was to let her alone. She should be let alone. That promise he made himself, and her. Aggie in the future should be safe from him.

He, too, could talk of books and pictures and music.

But, as the evening wore away, among the family photographs, Aggie with her knitting, he with his cigarette, the self-protecting wrappings of the day began to fall from him, and, with all their dead about them, he felt himself sucked back once again into the past that Aggie embodied. Gwen and Margaret, Dick and Randolph, there they all were, and he was again a gloomy, ironic, tormented youth, lying in the deep chair, tormented already by the dread of the abyss opening under their feet to swallow them all up. It had swallowed them all up, except him and Aggie, and in thinking of his youth, and of death, he knew that he would have been willing, indeed, as in the old days, to feel Aggie's gentle hand laid on his forehead.

For there was one thing in his life that Aggie could have understood and did, perhaps, understand now; one thing that he could never show her, or anybody; his loneliness; his dark loneliness and fear. The time might come, he knew it, lying there, while he and Aggie talked on in those listless tones, when love such as hers would be absolutely all that would be left to cling to.

Mrs. Grafton would not remain to close one's eyelids when one was dying; she would not even remain if one were ill.

But Aggie was not done with him. When they met next morning for the hurried breakfast before his departure, he found that the mask of morose civility he wore was inappropriate. Aggie might still be afraid of him; but she did not give him up. He had never seen her look so old; and yet a morning freshness, like dew, was on her.

What was it that had happened to her since they had parted? What had she seen anew or grasped afresh? — his need? or her own security? She had wept, he saw it, and she had lain awake; but she was like the meadowsweet; she brought balms and blessings from the night, and love shone on him from her eyes.

He felt that he blushed suddenly, and, trying to keep his footing, he remembered that poor old Aggie always got up again.

But, for the first time in his life, he had, this morning, a dim suspicion that his formulas were insufficient.

'Come again, dear Ralph, if you will,' she said.

The motor-bus was rumbling down the road and the little maid, astonished by her tip, was carrying out his valise. He and Aggie stood between the rows of clove-pinks and violas.

'It's dull here, I know. But if you ever wanted a rest ——'

'And if you ever want to see any pictures — to do a play, or concert, my dear old Agnes ——' It was perhaps the first time he had called her by her name.

They kissed each other. And then, unbelievably, Ralph heard himself muttering: 'Forgive me if I've been ill-tempered. I've had worries. I've been rather on edge. And I've always been an ill-tempered brute, you know, Agnes — like the rat.'

It was unbelievable to her, too. Tears were in her eyes as she heard him. She shook her head, trying to smile; not knowing what to say. 'But it wasn't ill-tempered; it wasn't, Ralph. There's where you made your mistake. I mean — *you're* not really ill-tempered, either.' No; she did not know what to say.

Then, as he drove away, back to London and Mrs. Grafton, Aggie stood at the gate waving to him, and the pale hair, like meadowsweet, was the last he saw of her.

Whatever you did to Aggie she would still go on loving you. That was what she had to give.

Could it be reduced to the craving for happiness, he wondered? And thinking of himself, he saw a dark, scurrying form disappearing into the muddy river-bank.

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN[1]

Elsie Singmaster

Philenus Rittenhouse, small, neat, clean-shaven, and almost the last of the Lancaster County Seventh-Day Baptists, was clearing out the shed beside his barn when Peter Zook, a Dunker, drove into the yard. Philenus's property lay on a hill back of the Ephrata Cloister, where the Seventh-Dayers had once lived in piety, celibacy, and mortification of the flesh. Philenus lived in piety, and on account of his poverty in some mortification of the flesh, but not in celibacy.

The barn and shed were old; the house, built to take the place of one which had nearly fallen to pieces, was new. On the porch was a single ancient object, a chair with spindle back and spreading rockers, adapted to the comfort of a mother with a baby in her arms. Such occupants the chair had had for five generations, and such occupants it had at present for some hours each day.

Philenus had been hunting in the shed to find an old rake with which to mend the slightly newer rake he had used to gather a heap of brush in the adjoining field. He had moved out on the ground a quantity of old stuff —

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dishes, some articles of tin and pewter, and a homely small cupboard intended to be hung on the wall.

On the other side of the road was a cemetery with thirty or forty neat white stones and one large monument marking the site of a pit where had been buried many soldiers carried to the Cloister after the battle of Brandywine. Philenus saw them in imagination, jolted mile after mile in springless carts only to die.

Beyond the graveyard the hill dropped to the Cloister itself beside smooth-flowing Cocalico Creek. By taking a few steps Philenus could see the steep roofs and the stream where his little children liked to fish.

On the other side of the Cloister lay Ephrata, but he did not look as far as that. Ephrata, with its bright advertisements, its automobiles, its inquisitive tourists, did not mean peace. Philenus believed that the citizens of Ephrata and a large part of the human race were rapidly losing their mental integrity.

Philenus was glad to see Peter Zook, first because Peter was his friend, and second because Peter owed him two hundred dollars. Peter had had many misfortunes and the brethren of his own faith had refused longer to help him, believing that three failures are a sign from the Lord that one is intended permanently to fail. Philenus could not see his friend in distress, even though he had to borrow some of the money to build his house.

Peter dropped the lines on the dashboard and clasped his hands. His face was round, the beard below his lip had a semi-circular outline, his black hat was a halo. He did not at once mention his debt.

'A nice day,' said he.

Philenus leaned against the cart. 'You have right.'

'I guess your ploughing is already done.'

'Yes, it dries off quick up here.'

Peter's eyes sought the earth and the sky, and to Philenus it was revealed that he did not have the two hundred dollars.

'You have much old stuff there.'

'Yes,' agreed Philenus. 'Old and worthless. Why it's here so long I do not know. Who would have such a cupboard with such poor carving? The people have now good cupboards.'

'You have old dishes.'

'Yes, but they, too, are no good.' He stooped and picked up an ancient platter with a border of close-set blue dots and a center-piece of red bird. 'Here is a plate which is fair; Sally, she could perhaps use it for the mash for the little turkeys.' He held it under his arm like a book. 'Here's a tea-pot, it's perhaps already two hundred years cracked. Here's such a light as was used when they had no oil.' He picked up a rush lamp and it came to pieces in his hands. 'What this other is I do not know.'

'It's such a nursing-can before they had the glass bottles for the babies. That's powerful old, Philenus!'

Philenus twisted the small can and tossed the pieces out into the field.

'This truck is to be redd up once,' said he.

The breeze quickened, as if to say, 'You've waited long enough, get it out!' Peter sighed; he put his hand into his pocket. The heart of Philenus leaped.

'Philenus, I brought you a little money. I'm getting on my feet, but it's slow work. Here's twenty-five dollars.'

'Yes?' Philenus spoke inquiringly, hoping that Peter would make a definite statement about a future payment, but Peter made none. Peter reached his hand down, Philenus reached his up. He did not count the money, he gave no receipt; such precautions are unnecessary between honest men.

Peter gathered up the lines. He frowned, his eyes fixed on the pile of junk.

'It gives such a sale in Ephrata.' He pronounced it in the old way — 'Ephrataw.' 'You can sell old things.'

'Not such old things,' said Philenus. 'These are of no use.'

'It's astonishing what old things you can sell,' declared Peter.

'Where is this sale?' Philenus looked at the pile at his feet. If he could get a dollar and a half, he could buy a new rake. The twenty-five dollars he would have to carry at once to the builder of his house.

'In the band hall,' explained Peter. 'The auctioneer, he's a nice, common man. He has red hair.'

'And when is it?'

'To-morrow and the next day.'

'It might be that I will do that.'

Philenus's eyes followed Peter out the gate, then they sought the sky. Why, it was almost noon! A short round figure appeared in the doorway of the kitchen.

'Pop,' said a clear voice.

'Yes,' said Philenus. 'I guess you want I should fetch them.'

'That is it.'

Philenus crossed the road and went down the hill, avoiding as well as he could the violets and spring beauties. Beside the creek sat two children, a little girl of six named Nellie, and a boy of four who had probably the most unusual name of all the unusual names in Lancaster County — Priapus. Nellie was unfettered, Priapus was tied to a tree. The long rope enabled him to go close to the stream and prevented him from falling in.

'Hello, Pop!' said he in a voice like the sweet pipe of a bird.

'Hello!' answered Philenus. 'Does somesing bite you?'

'A while back somesing bit me.'

Nellie was a child of extraordinary wit. 'Somesing bites me in my stummick.'

Philenus untied Priapus and took a hand of each child.

He was supremely happy and content — it was spring and he had a home and a wife and children and he could pay twenty-five dollars on his debt and perhaps buy a new rake.

'Come on,' said he. 'Mom, she can soon cure the biting in the stummick.'

At five o'clock in the morning, Philenus drove to Ephrata, to take his can of milk to the creamery, and to carry the old cupboard and the platter to the band hall. He looked toward the cemetery and shook his head — a hundred and fifty young soldiers in one sorrowful grave — it spoiled the day.

'I must remind myself that they are long dust and ashes,' he said. 'Their souls are elsewhere.'

He shook his head as he passed the farm next his own. The owner was much more prosperous than he because he had good soil for tobacco. To Philenus the growing of tobacco was wrong, as well as its consumption, and so strong was his prejudice that even the odor made him ill.

Ephrata was already awake. The storekeepers were sweeping their pavements and calling to one another, the proprietor of the hotel was dusting the chairs on the porch, and in the drug-store a phonograph was playing. Philenus turned out of the main street and drove up before the band hall. On the step stood a large man with a red beard and a look which might be described as 'common,' by which Philenus meant friendly, the opposite of proud. He turned from unlocking the door and looked over his shoulder.

'Well, brother?'

Philenus did not like this address and his cheek reddened. The auctioneer's gay necktie, his gold teeth, and his manner stamped him as of the world. He looked into Philenus's cart and in spite of the heaviness of his body he gave a little spring. He waited for Philenus to speak.

'I heard it gave here auction.'

'It will give auction.'

'Perhaps you could sell such a plate and such a cupboard.' Philenus blushed.

The auctioneer's eyes glittered. 'Where did they come from?'

'They were my great-gran'mom's, but I guess they go far back of that yet. Such cupboards they had in the Cloister. The dish is a worldly dish.'

'You mean you want to sell them?' The auctioneer's large hand, decorated with a seal ring, fingered the ancient objects.

'That was my idea.'

'Have you any more old things?'

'I have such a cracked teapot.'

'Of this splatter ware?'

'Splatter ware?'

The auctioneer pointed to the dots. 'Yes, splatter ware. Color splattered on. Is your teapot like the plate?'

'It's like the plate, but cracked.'

'With such a bird on it?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Can you go get it?'

'I'll see how these sell once.'

The auctioneer lifted down the cupboard and the plate. 'I'll put these up this afternoon about four o'clock.'

'I can come at that time,' said Philenus. 'Then I can take them along if they're not sold. I'm burning brush to-night and I can put them on the fire.'

The auctioneer uttered a loud guffaw. 'Yes, you can put them on the fire! I guess you can put them on the fire!' He winked at Philenus, and Philenus, thinking this was his fashion of saying farewell, climbed into the wagon and drove away.

At half-past three Philenus drove down the hill. He blinked for shame as he thought of the old platter and the homely cupboard. There were stains on the platter; he might at least have had Sally scrub them off with knife-brick! The cupboard had nothing to recommend it; it was made of heavy unpainted wood and the only ornamentation was a crude scalloping along the top and a homely beveling on the panels of the door.

When he turned into the street where the band hall stood, he saw to his amazement that one automobile was parked close against another. These were not the cars of farmers; they were large and handsome vehicles — where had their occupants gone? He drove on another block and still another and tied his horse and returned.

At the door of the hall he was greeted first by the odor of sauerkraut, then by ranks of bottles on a stand. The bottles contained ginger-ale and other innocuous drinks, but to Philenus a bottle was a bottle. He was very fond of sauerkraut, but its proximity to the ginger-ale made it objectionable. He caught the strong odor of tobacco and was still more offended. But he must recover his property, worthless as it was.

Stepping inside, he was astounded — here were the people from the automobiles, all crowded together and sitting as quietly as though they were in meeting! The odor of sauerkraut was intensified, the air was rank with tobacco smoke. There was little space left for air of any sort, pure or impure. Piled upon one another were ancient objects, desks, bureaus, chests of drawers, washstands, cradles, dough-troughs. Hanging from the gallery which ran round the wall were quilts and coverlets. On the platform was the thickest congestion; in cupboards and on tables stood dishes and glass and pewter and painted tin. The light, as one came in from the sunshine, was dim, but there was one luminous and almost incandescent spot, the beard of the auctioneer across which struck a shaft of sunlight. His head seemed to float in air; if he had looked as of the world in the morning, he looked now as of the lower world. He was shouting, but what he said Philenus could not understand.

The scene had interesting qualities of beauty and age and mellow color and soft light, but these Philenus did not recognize. He turned his head now this way, now that, and presently caught the eye of a Mennonite standing near by.

'What does it give?' he asked.

The Mennonite shook his head. 'Here's all the junk from Lampeter and Leacock and Manheim and all other townships. The brethren are here and the sisters, and they are for sure getting ahead of the worldly people.'

Failing to see over the heads of the crowd, Philenus climbed to the gallery. Here, too, people sat close together, fashionable ladies and gentlemen, pressing against rough men who smoked pipes. To his horror one lady lit a cigarette. He sat down on a bench and leaned his arms on the railing. The auctioneer was apparently selling a number of things at one time.

'What do I get?' he cried. 'What do I get? Forty dollars, I get. Forty dollars, forty-one, forty-one, forty-two, forty-two! Shall I stop going? Say, shall I stop going at this low price? Forty-two, forty-two, forty-two! No more fooling! Going, going, going! Diehl will get it, you oughtn't to let him get everything! Going, going, gone at forty-two dollars to the smartest trader in Lancaster County!'

A man stepped to the platform and took from the hands of the auctioneer a cup and saucer, made of the same spatter ware as that which Philenus had brought, and handed them to Mr. Diehl, a short, heavy, and handsome man whose pipe was as permanent a feature as his nose or eyes. He smiled and made some answer, but Philenus could hear only the round deep tone. The cup and saucer must be part of a whole tea-set; perhaps enough pieces had come in to compose a set, and his platter was among them. Forty-two dollars was a large sum to pay for a tea-set, but rich people would pay anything for what they wanted. Perhaps the cupboard was thrown in. Hearing a loud 'Ah!' he looked back at the platform. Held high in the hand of the auctioneer was the oblong platter he had found in the shed.

'You're right, "Ah!"' said the auctioneer. 'Is not this enough to make your mouth water, folks? I've been auctioning for thirty-seven years, and never yet did I see another. Cups and saucers I've seen, and teapots and plates, but no platter. Now, friends, I want to tell you the history of this platter. I needn't go into the past history — you're all knowing persons — it's the present history. This platter was in a shed where it laid for many years. Now yesterday the owner was redding up, and this he redd up. Now, folks, I want to tell you something. Unless this brings a certain price, I myself will bid it in. There are folks in this world who will appreciate this even if there's no one here present who will appreciate it. Mark my words, I tell you! I can get out a certificate for it. I know the owner. He belongs to the plain people; he wouldn't tell even a white lie. He'll give you the pedigree, but no one needs a pedigree for this platter, this platter speaks for itself. I might say this platter hollers for itself. I might say ——'

'Twenty-five dollars,' interrupted an alien voice.

'You did right when you interrupted,' said the auctioneer. 'Talking, as I said, is wasted. But you're a little low. As interrupting twenty-five is all right; as bidding, it's zero.'

'Fifty!' said another alien voice.

'That's jumping!' The auctioneer set the platter on the table beside him and shook his arms and rubbed his hands together. 'Do I hear fifty? Fifty? Fifty, fifty, fifty; do I hear sixty?'

Philenus was leaning out over the gallery. He was smiling, but a little uneasy — a quarter would have been a large sum for this old plate.

'Seventy,' said another voice.

'Now we get somewheres!' The auctioneer's gold teeth shone, another shaft of light struck his red beard. 'I'd like to ask a question, folks. It gets later and later. I have another treasure, yet more wonderful than this, folks. Why waste your time climbing a ladder little by little? It takes an airplane to reach where this platter will yet go!'

'Eighty,' said a voice.

'Eighty-one.'

'Eighty-two.'

'Eighty-three.'

Philenus turned to his nearest neighbor. 'Eighty-three is enough,' he said uneasily.

'It'll go to a hundred,' said the neighbor.

It was already eighty-nine.

'Ninety.'

When some one said, 'Ninety-two-fifty,' Philenus was puzzled as well as dismayed.

'Ninety-four,' said a voice.

The auctioneer shouted, then screamed.

'Ninety-five! I hear ninety-five. I hear ninety-six! Do I hear ninety-seven? Ninety-seven, ninety-seven, seven, seven, seven, seven! I hear ninety-eight! Push it up, push it up! Help me out of the sticks into the cleared land, folks. Ninety-eight, going, going, going. Ninety-eight! Ninety-nine, I hear, ninety-nine! Going one hundred! One hundred is little enough! No one going above one hundred! Going, going, going, gone!' He drew his finger across his neck as though he were severing it. 'Going to Diehl at one hundred, the second greatest treasure at the sale. Diehl will get rid of it at two hundred, won't you, Diehl? To the first New-Yorker that comes down the pike. No wonder he buys himself all the time such Oriental rugs, say Diehl?'

There was a loud laugh.

'Does he mean a dollar by his hundred cents?' asked Philenus.

'He means a hundred dollars.'

'For such an old plate!' cried Philenus, growing pale.

'Bet your life!'

'But that's cheating!' said Philenus. 'My great-gran'-mom's old plate what we had in the shed!'

'Look once down,' said the stranger.

Beside the auctioneer stood an assistant, in his arms the old cupboard. The auctioneer rubbed his hands.

'Now I don't hear any "ah's," do I?' he said. 'No wonder you're dumbfounded, folks. This came from the same shed as the platter. It laid in the corner, the rats ran over it, the mice played in it. Its grandmother, *ach!* — I mean the grandmother of the owner — she was one of the famous Seventh-Dayers what lived in our Cloister. You can have a choice, you dealers, when Henry Ford comes to buy relics of the Pennsylvania Dutch, you can tell him it was in the Cloister or it wasn't in the Cloister. One is a lie, one is the truth — you cannot tell which, so you can take your choice. Here are the hinges, here is the beveled panel. Look at the inside! I tell you, folks, we are treading on holy ground. It's my conviction that you dare say to any one this was in the Cloister. Worse lies have been told, already. It's again no use wasting time on preliminaries; I will put it in one word without waiting for anything else or saying anything else, because, folks, I don't need to say anything else, you're in the dealing business and you're intelligent people; in short, what am I bid for this wall cupboard, such as was made by the Cloister people, such as was hung in the Cloister, such as likely is the last of its kind? What, friends, am I — I might say also that this is as much a surprise to me as to you. This was brought this morning by ——'

'Fifty,' said a voice.

'Now, folks, as I said, why waste our time? Suppose you had a cupboard like this, Mr. Langschmidt, and some one came and offered you fifty dollars, what would you say?'

At Mr. Langschmidt's shocking response, Philenus almost fell from the gallery.

'I would tell him where he could go to.'

'Let us then improve on that bid!' shouted the auctioneer. 'What am I bid, now a rational bid, folks? I have my living to earn, remember.'

'Seventy-five.'

'*Ach*, I want a real bid! A real bid for a real wall cupboard that was in the Cloister. No one can prove it wasn't in the Cloister. Now ——'

'One hundred,' offered a stranger.

'Twenty-five,' said the smooth voice of Diehl.

'Folks, you're lost if Diehl wants it,' laughed the auctioneer. 'Diehl sold a house last week, he has ready money. This is worth a house. This ——'

'One hundred fifty.'

'One hundred seventy-five.'

'They surely mean cents,' whispered Philenus hoarsely.

'They mean dollars,' answered the neighbor. 'This is no cent show.'

'Two hundred,' said a voice.

'Two hundred five.'

'Two hundred ten.'

'Will they sell it and make the people believe it was in the Cloister?' asked Philenus, horrified.

'Why not?' asked his neighbor. 'The people like to be cheated. Let them be cheated.'

A horror of the auctioneer, of the people, of the bad air, of himself, came over Philenus. He went to the back of the gallery and down the stairs and up the aisle.

'That's mine!' he cried in a loud tone. 'And the plate's mine. They were my great-gran'mom's. I must have them back.'

There was instantly a profound silence; the auctioneer stood as if petrified, his assistant's jaw dropped, every neck craned this way or that. The auctioneer uttered a roar of laughter.

'You can never have them back. You can't rue bargain when Hilty's auctioneer.'

'The cupboard is not sold,' declared Philenus. 'I will not sell it; I want it back.' He stepped up the stairs to the platform and took the cupboard in his hand. 'I want my plate.'

'By heck, that you can't have,' declared the auctioneer furiously. 'Why, man, are you flopped in the bellskop? A hundred dollars for a plate you had lying in the shed!'

Tears began to run down Philenus's face. He was terrified lest he burst into sobs. The voice of Mr. Diehl caught his ear and composed him. Diehl spoke round the stem of his pipe.

'I'm the buyer of the platter. Let him have it.'

With the cupboard on one arm and the platter on the other, Philenus sought the open door. A lady was sitting with her knees crossed; he saw a red garter and was outraged. The auctioneer tried to be facetious, but he was deeply angry.

'Don't think he's dumb,' he said. 'But prices won't go higher than they are now. Let us make hay while the sun shines. Here's a neat article, dealers, this for the tourists that don't want to plunge so deep. This you can't pick up in the sticks. Now, what am I ——'

Philenus was at last in the air. Across the street on an open lot other goods were assembled, tables and bureaus, kitchen utensils, dough-troughs, chests of drawers, all of rough construction. A woman turned from contemplating them to look at Philenus and his burden.

'Did you buy that stuff?' she inquired.

'No.'

'Is it yours?'

'Yes.'

'You'd better sell it. I sold Gran'mom's bureau and her clock and bought me a radio and a poll-parrot. You'd better sell them and get you a radio.'

'No,' said Philenus with horror.

In the evening Philenus stood at his gate. The setting sun gilded the towering monument. He repeated aloud the inscription upon it; he said it often to himself with mourning, 'Hier liehen die Gebeine vielen Soldaten.' He looked upon the flowery hillside and the old trees and upon his children playing by the Cocalico Creek; he thought of the brothers and sisters of two centuries ago marching in midnight procession from their tiny cells to the meeting-room to pray for all mankind.

An automobile came up the road and stopped at the gate and a man got out. He wore short trousers strapped in at the knee, a pleated coat and a cap. Philenus had seen him at the sale and his ornate car outside. His car suggested a calliope and had a horn like a calliope. He came to Philenus standing by the gate.

'I'll give you a hundred and fifty dollars for that plate and five hundred for that wall cupboard.'

'No,' said Philenus.

'Will no price tempt you?'

'No price,' said Philenus.

In spite of the dim light a lady in the car was leveling a camera upon him. He turned on his heel and went into the house and closed the door. There was no rudeness in the act, only becoming dignity. There was also a stronger emotion; he believed this was the lady whose red garter he had seen. When the car vanished, he reappeared; he must go and bring the children home. He went down over the hill.

'Well,' said he, 'does somesing bite you?'

'No,' sighed Nellie. 'Still nosing bites me.'

'Nosing bites me too,' chuckled Priapus.

'Then let's go home,' said Philenus. 'We will light the big fire.'

The children took his hands and toiled up the hill. Sally came to the door.

'Here are matches,' said she.

'I thank myself,' answered Philenus politely. 'I should have also yet some paper.'

Together he and the children crossed the yard and went to the field. The children skipped and laughed.

'It will give a fire as high as the barn!'

Philenus lit the paper and laid it to the vast pile. The flames leaped from twig to twig, the children screamed. On top of the pile were several dark objects which sank into the glowing mass.

'Hello!' said a voice.

Startled, Philenus saw Mr. Diehl at his side. From eye to eye leaped a common joy in the color, the orange and crimson and gold against the darkening sky. In the eye of Philenus delight was unmixed, in the eye of Diehl it was dimmed by a sudden shocked suspicion.

'Pretty, isn't it?' said Diehl.

'Yes, sir,' agreed Philenus.

'These your children?'

'Yes, sir.'

Diehl took a puff at his pipe.

'I know exactly how you felt about that plate and that cupboard,' said he uneasily. 'The price went against your conscience. Suppose you tell me what you'd consider fair. Don't make it too low; remember they're very old and very valuable.'

'He talked of cheating the people,' said Philenus.

'He didn't mean just that,' said Diehl. 'Let me pay you what you think is right.'

Philenus shook his head. 'My great-gran'mom was a godly woman.'

'I'll put them in my collection,' promised Diehl. 'They're relics of the old time. Eventually such things get to museums so that people can see how others lived.'

'She was a retiring woman; she would not like her things in museums.'

'You can't take your things with you.' Diehl had decided that his suspicion was ludicrous. 'Things remain; they don't die like human beings.'

'It's things that die,' insisted Philenus. 'The human beings live and must give an account in the Day of Judgment. I'll never cheat the people.'

Diehl looked at Philenus, then into the fire. He too saw ghostly brothers and sisters coming and going, coming and going, mortifying their bodies, cultivating their souls.

'So you burned the cupboard and the platter?' he said gravely, but with a little amusement, as though he could step outside himself and regard his own dismay.

'I burned them,' said Philenus. 'I will not cheat the people, nor shall little Nellie nor Priapus.'

THE END

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS BY MARY AUSTIN

1903	The Land of Little Rain
1904	The Basket Woman
1905	Isidro
1906	The Flock
1908	Santa Lucia
1909	Lost Borders
1911	Christ in Italy The Arrow Maker (*Reissued* 1915)
1912	Woman of Genius (*Reissued* 1917)
1913	The Lovely Lady
1914	Love and the Soul-Maker
1915	The Man Jesus
1917	The Ford
1918	The Young Woman Citizen The Trail Book
1919	Outland
1920	No. 26 Jayne Street
1923	The American Rhythm (*Reissued* 1930)
1924	The Land of Journeys' Ending
1925	A Small Town Man Everyman's Genius
1927	Lands of the Sun
1928	The Children Sing in the Far West
(For publication, 1931)	Starry Adventure
(In preparation)	Autobiography

BOOKS BY MARGARET AYER BARNES

1928	Prevailing Winds
1930	Years of Grace

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS BY PHYLLIS BOTTOME

1914 The Captive
1916 The Dark Tower
1917 The Derelict and Other Stories
The Second Fiddle
1918 Helen of Troy and Rose
1919 The Servant of Reality
1921 The Crystal Heart
1922 The Kingfisher
1924 The Perfect Wife
1925 Old Wine
Depth of Prosperity
1927 The Belated Reckoning
The Rat
The Messenger of the Gods
1928 Strange Fruit
1929 Windlestraws
1930 Tatter'd Loving

BOOKS BY JOHN BUCHAN

1895 Sir Quixote
1896 Musa Piscatrix
Scholar Gipsies
1898 John Burnet of Barns
A History of Brasenose College
1899 Grey Weather
A Lost Lady of Old Years
1900 The Half-Hearted (*Reissued* 1928)
1902 The Watcher by the Threshold
1903 The African Colony

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1905	The Taxation of Foreign Income
1906	A Lodge in the Wilderness
1908	Some Eighteenth Century By-ways
1910	Prester John (*Reissued* 1928)
1911	Sir Walter Raleigh
1912	The Moon Endureth
1913	The Marquis of Montrose
1915	The Thirty-Nine Steps (*Reissued* 1928)
	Salute to Adventurers (*Reissued* 1930)
1916	Greenmantle (*Reissued* 1928)
1917	Poems, Scots and English
1919	Mr. Standfast (*Reissued* 1928)
1920	The South African Forces in France
	Francis and Riversdale Grenfell
1921	The Path of the King (*To be reissued* 1931)
1921–22	A History of the Great War
1922	Huntingtower
1923	Midwinter (*Reissued* 1929)
	Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys
1923–24	The Nations of Today (*Editor*)
1924	The Three Hostages
	Lord Minto
	The Last Secrets
1925	John Macnab
	The Royal Scots Fusiliers
	Two Ordeals of Democracy
	The Northern Muse
1926	The Dancing Floor
	Homilies and Recreation
1927	Witch Wood
1928	Montrose

1928 Runagates Club
1929 Courts of the Morning
1930 Castle Gay

BOOKS BY KATHARINE NEWLIN BURT

1919 The Branding Iron
1920 Hidden Creek
The Red Lady
1921 Snow-Blind
1922 'Q'
1925 Quest
1928 Cock's Feather

BOOKS BY WILLA CATHER

1912 Alexander's Bridge
1913 O Pioneers!
1915 The Song of the Lark
1918 My Ántonia
1920 Youth and the Bright Medusa
1922 One of Ours
1923 A Lost Lady
April Twilights
1925 The Professor's House
1926 My Mortal Enemy
1927 Death Comes for the Archbishop

BOOKS BY ESTHER FORBES

1926 O Genteel Lady!
1928 A Mirror for Witches

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS BY JAMES NORMAN HALL

1916 Kitchener's Mob
1918 High Adventure
1920 The Lafayette Flying Corps (With Charles B. Nordhoff)
1926 On the Stream of Travel
1928 Mid-Pacific
1929 Falcons of France (With Charles B. Nordhoff)
1930 Flying with Chaucer
Mother Goose Land
(For publication, 1931) Tahiti

BOOKS BY HENRY SYDNOR HARRISON

1911 Queed
1913 V. V.'s Eyes
1915 Angela's Business
1919 When I Come Back
1922 Saint Teresa
1925 Andrew Bride of Paris
(For publication, 1931) The Good Hope

BOOK BY OLIVER LAFARGE

1929 Laughing Boy

BOOKS BY DENIS MACKAIL

1920 What Next?
1921 Romance to the Rescue
1922 Bill the Bachelor
1923 According to Gibson
Summertime

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1924 The Majestic Mystery
1925 Greenery Street
1926 The Fortunes of Hugo
1927 The Flower Show
1928 Tales from Greenery Street
1929 Another Part of the Wood
How Amusing!
1930 The Young Livingstones
(For publication, 1931) The Square Circle

BOOKS BY HAROLD NICOLSON

1920 Paul Verlaine
1921 Sweet Waters
1923 Tennyson
1924 Byron: The Last Journey
1925 Swinburne
1927 Some People
1928 History of English Biography
1930 Portrait of a Diplomatist

BOOKS BY ROLAND PERTWEE

1917 The Transactions of Lord Louis Lewis
1922 Men of Affairs
1923 The Singing Wells
1924 The South Sea Bubble
1926 Rivers to Cross
1927 Gentlemen March
Interference
1928 Fish Are Such Liars
1929 Hell's Loose
1930 Pursuit

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS BY RAFAEL SABATINI

1904 The Tavern Knight (*Reissued* 1927)
1906 Bardleys the Magnificent (*Reissued* 1924)
Trampling of the Lilies (*Reissued* 1925)
1907 Love at Arms (*Reissued* 1925)
1908 The Shame of Motley (*Reissued* 1925)
1909 St. Martin's Summer (*Reissued* 1924)
1910 Arms and the Maid (*Reissued* 1924 as Mistress Wilding)
1911 The Lion's Skin (*Reissued* 1926)
1912 Cesare Borgia (*Reissued* 1924)
1913 Torquemada (*Reissued* 1924)
The Strolling Saint (*Reissued* 1925)
1914 The Gates of Doom (*Reissued* 1925)
1915 The Sea-Hawk (*Reissued* 1923)
1917 The Banner of the Bull (*Reissued* 1923)
The Snare (*Reissued* 1923)
1918 Historical Nights' Entertainment, Volume 1 (*Reissued* 1924)
1919 Historical Nights' Entertainment, Volume II (*Reissued* 1924)
1921 Scaramouche
1922 Captain Blood
1923 Fortune's Fool
1925 The Carolinian
1926 Bellarion
1927 The Nuptials of Corbal
1928 The Hounds of God
1929 The Romantic Prince
1930 The King's Minion
(For publication, 1931) Chronicles of Captain Blood

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS BY ANNE DOUGLAS SEDGWICK

1898 The Dull Miss Archinard
1899 The Confounding of Camelia
1902 The Rescue
1904 Paths of Judgment
1906 The Shadow of Life
1907 A Fountain Sealed (*Reissued* 1925)
1908 Amabel Channice
1910 Franklin Winslow Kane (*Reissued* 1925)
1911 Tante
1912 The Nest (*Reissued* 1926)
1914 The Encounter (*Reissued* 1930)
1918 A Childhood in Brittany Eighty Years Ago (*Reissued* 1927)
1920 Christmas Roses
The Third Window
1922 Adrienne Toner
1924 The Little French Girl
1927 The Old Countess
1929 Dark Hester
1930 Philippa

BOOKS BY ELSIE SINGMASTER

1909 When Sarah Saved the Day
1910 When Sarah Went to School
1913 Gettysburg
1915 Katy Gaumer
1916 Emmeline
1917 The Long Journey
The Life of Martin Luther

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1920	John Baring's House
	Basil Everman
1921	Ellen Levis
1922	Bennett Malin
1923	The Hidden Road
1924	A Boy at Gettysburg
1925	Bred in the Bone
	Book of the United States
1926	Book of the Constitution
	Keller's Anna Ruth
1927	'Sewing Susie'
	Book of the Colonies
1928	What Everybody Wanted
1929	Virginia's Bandit
	You Make Your Own Luck
1930	A Little Money Ahead

(For publication, 1931) The Young Ravenels
(For publication, 1931) Gettysburg (*Revised edition*)

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